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OR,

Gospel Sermons

FOR

CONGREGATIONS AND FAMILIES.

ISSUED BY DIRECTION OF

THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF UNIVERSALISTS.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

We herewith present a Second Volume of Sermons for the use of Societies without ministers, of unorganized circles of Worshippers, and of Private Believers generally. In sending it forth on its mission of love, we accompany it with *Christian Salutations* to all of like precious faith. We offer the volume itself as an embodied Prayer for the extension and universal enjoyment of the blessings of Christian Worship!

When called by the General Convention of Universalists, at its late session, to the labor of editing this Volume, could I have foreseen that a confinement of several weeks to my chamber by sickness, with some other untoward occurrences, would crowd that labor into the short period of a single month, I should have felt it my duty to decline the responsibility. In the hurried passage of these pages through the press, at the rate of nearly a "*Form*" a day, it is hardly possible but that some errors will have escaped detection. It is hoped, however, that few of them will be found of sufficient consequence to attract the attention of the general reader.

To the Brethren who have so kindly and so promptly responded to the call of the Convention for Sermons, made upon them through the Editor, we hereby present our most hearty personal acknowledgments and the thanks of our entire Zion. For a more adequate recom-

pense, we commend to them the gratitude of many hearts, which, under the providence of God, may be born into the Kingdom, or may be made to drink more copious draughts from the Fountain of Life, through their instrumentality.

The last sermon in the Volume, with the very appropriate title, "IT IS FINISHED," from the pen of our late, most esteemed, and lamented Brother, Rev. L. L. Sadler, was delivered in Lowell in the pulpit of the First Church, in August, and was his last public discourse.

We have preserved the general style of the former Volume; designating the Prayers added by the Editor by a [*] star, and assigning the Sermons in the Index to the consecutive Sundays of the first half of the Year. It should not be forgotten, however, that this arrangement is in no degree based on the character of the discourses themselves; nor should it be allowed to prevent a departure from that order, whenever bereavement, misfortune, or other occurrences shall make such a departure desirable.

We send forth the work with the humble Prayer that Divine Goodness may be pleased to bless it as a Means of Grace.

A. A. M.

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GOSPEL SERMONS.

ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST.

BY REV. I. D. WILLIAMSON, D. D. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JOHN VI. 27–71.

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God.—JOHN VI. 68, 69.

IN the preceding context our Saviour announced himself as the "Living bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." "The words that I speak unto you," said he, "they are spirit, and they are life." This announcement, together with the assurance that no man could come unto him except it were given him of the Father, seems to have staggered the faith of many of his followers; and, from that time forth, they went back and walked no more with him. "Then said he unto the twelve, will ye also go away?" Then answered Peter, saying, as in our text, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The idea is, that Christ was all-

sufficient; his words were enough to satisfy their moral and spiritual wants; — their faith in him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, was entirely satisfactory, and there was no other teacher to whom they could go for instruction without being losers by the exchange.

The subject thus introduced, leads us naturally to treat of the All-sufficiency of Christ and his Gospel, and the impropriety of departing from him and his religion, at least, until we are quite certain that we have found something better.

I commence this discussion by saying, that, in things spiritual and divine, man needs, and he must have, a teacher. No human philosophy, no depth or profundity of science, no effort of the unaided reason of man, can penetrate the counsels of God, or explore the secrets of the invisible and the spiritual. These things must come to us by revelation, if they come at all; and hence there is a necessity for a teacher sent of God, who shall be able to announce divine truth authoritatively. Without such a guide, man wanders, he knows not where. As the man who would explore the Alps and find his way in safety through the awful chasms where darkness reigns, and along the dizzy heights where the avalanche thunders, needs a trusty guide to direct his steps; so the man who would explore the "mountains of the Lord," and penetrate the regions of the spiritual and invisible, must also have a reliable teacher and guide, and must walk by faith in him. The truth of this

position, it is presumed, no man can gainsay or successfully controvert. If we examine the history of the world, we shall find it true, in all ages, that there have been a few leaders, who were men of adventurous spirits, and, it may be, of commanding intellects, who have pitched their flight into regions which the common mind could not explore, and have thus become the teachers of the world. They have led the way, and the masses of men have been content to follow their lead. Blind leaders of the blind, many of them have been, beyond all question, and, as might be expected, both have often fallen into the ditch; nevertheless, the readiness with which the people of every nation, sect, and creed have ranged themselves under the banners of their respective leaders, and taken their places in the ranks to follow on, is proof that there is an imperious necessity for a guide of some sort, to lead the masses of men in the way of truth and duty, and that man must and will have a leader.

Further, let it be noted, that the erratic course of the leaders themselves — the fact that they have stumbled in the dark, and wandered in all sorts of vagaries and errors of the most opposite and contradictory character, is proof that they, too, needed a guide not less than those that they essayed to direct.

The result is, that men need a guide, a reliable teacher; and the real question with which we

have to do, is not whether we will be taught at all, but rather to *whom* shall we go?

We, my brethren, professedly, at least, have taken Jesus Christ for our teacher and guide. We believe and are sure that he is the Christ, commissioned of God to teach the world in the way of wisdom—to reveal God to the world, and to guide our wandering feet in the way of life. We profess to be Christians, and to receive the doctrines of Jesus as divinely true.

In these times, when many are saying, Lo! here, and lo! there; when the human intellect, with teeming fecundity, is bringing forth theories and speculations without number, and men who claim to be High Priests of Nature, are urging us to follow their lead, the question, To whom shall we go, is surely legitimate, and should be pondered well. In whom shall we find a more reliable guide or safe teacher, than in him of Nazareth? Are his teachings adequate to meet the moral and spiritual wants of man? And, if we leave him and follow another, shall we be gainers by the exchange? These are questions of deep and solemn significance. They bear upon our best hopes and our highest good; and in matters of such moment no man is justified in taking a leap in the dark. Let us contemplate the teachings of Christ, for a few moments, as compared with others, and see if it is worth our while to forsake him.

I. Consider his moral instructions.

There is nothing that the wise and the good have more earnestly sought, than a system of ethics adapted to man's nature, and able, at all times, to guide man in the path of duty. Who will show us any good? Who will teach us what we must *do*, and how we must live, to attain the true ends of life and arrive at the perfection of our being? These are questions that have been agitated from the beginning.

The answer has been sought in rules for the guidance of the outward conduct. Codes of moral laws, voluminous, conflicting, and contradictory, have been drawn up, and duty has been defined in all possible directions. One has pointed in one way, and said, Do this, and ye shall live; and another has pointed in the opposite direction, and said, Do *that*, and duty is done. Worship, prayer, fasting, sacrifices, and privations have each had their advocates, as comprehending the highest forms of duty. Some have taught that to retire from all commerce with the world, and live a life of austerity and contemplation, is the true life. Others have found the highest aim of life in the gratification of the sensual appetites and passions. The idolater thinks his highest duty is to cut his flesh or cast himself down to be crushed beneath the wheels of the car of Juggernaut. A pilgrimage to Mecca, — a visit to the land of the prophet, and a battle in defence of the faith, are the prime duties of the Moslem. Fasting and penance, paternos-

ters and prayers, are the highest duties known to the followers of the Pope.

In the midst of this Babel of confusion, let us pause for a moment, and ask of Jesus what we must do? He shall answer us thus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." But what shall we do in manifestation of this love to man? Answer: "All things whatsoever that ye would men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Here then we have the sum and substance of the whole matter, the great principle that runs unbroken through all the tangled web of life, and indicates with certainty the path of duty at all times and under all circumstances. No huge volumes of statutes and laws, no long code of directions for the regulation of the hands, is here. But the great *principle* of all law, the solution of the problem of all duty, is here. It all centres in, and proceeds from, Love? This great law of love underlies and terminates all laws, and is destined to supersede them all. In its practice all duty is done, and he that lives up to it never need doubt for a moment that he is in the right path.

Let me ask now if the world has ever seen or heard of a safer or better guide? Let any

man reflect after this manner: Was I ever led astray, or did I ever speak a word or do an act for which I felt a pang of regret when I kept close to this law of Christ? Well, then, if you ask me to forsake Christ, as the great teacher of morality, and seek another guide, to whom shall I go? If I go to the infidel, who abjures Christ, he will tell me that the indulgence of my appetites and passions is lawful and revenge justifiable. If I go to Mahomet, he will put a sword in my hand and bid me fight for the faith; and if I go to the Pope, he will bid me pray, confess, do penance, and submit to my supervisors, and leave the rest to the church.

But I am told that there are certain spiritual manifestations in these days. A new era has dawned upon the world, and the spirits of the departed dead have come to the earth to teach man in the way of duty, and we must learn of them the path of wisdom. Very well; but have the spirits taught anything better than this? I must be permitted to doubt if any spirit, living or dead, has discovered a guide to duty safer or more excellent than the great law of love taught by the Saviour. But I am told that the spirits teach this same law of love, and hence the utility of their mission. If this be so, I do not see the necessity of their communications in this regard. That law of love was taught and embodied in the person and the life of Christ ages ago. That old Bible which contains it was rocked in our cradles with us, and we have but

to open its pages to find and read it, in our own native tongue. Why, then, should I leave Christ to follow after spirits, in order to learn the law that I have heard from him, from the days of my youth? But if they do teach anything *different* from this law of love, I would say, as Paul said, "Though an angel from heaven teach any other Gospel, let him be accursed." I have heard of no spirit wiser than Jesus; I have heard of none better; and I insist again that his teachings are an all-sufficient guide in the path of duty; and that the man who will follow him need not err. When, therefore, I am asked to leave the record of a Saviour's precepts and life to go in search of another guide, I must ask, "To whom shall I go?" In whom can I confide more trustfully? Who will guide me more safely? Until these questions are answered, I will hold fast to the Saviour and I will not let him go.

II. Consider the doctrinal teachings of Christ.

These are few and simple, and of great power and mighty import. Let us briefly notice the main features of these doctrines; I mean those that are peculiar to Christ as a teacher. They are

1. The paternity of God.

The existence of God had been taught among the Jews before Christ, and the truth that He was one and undivided was the distinguishing feature of their religion. The heathen had a multitude of gods, to whose agency they ascribed the various

phenomena of the universe. The philosophy of the world groped in darkness as to the cause of all things, and busied itself then as now, with the material and the secondary, never rising into the region of the efficient and the absolute. It was the mission of Moses to reveal the one living and true God, as the Creator of all things, the one single and absolute cause of all causes — the ruler and governor among the nations, whose power none could resist, and whose sway none could escape. The long line of prophets that followed him illustrated the attributes of God; His wisdom and justice, and mercy and truth; and set Him forth as the King of nations and men. And this was the highest aspect in which they viewed or presented Him.

But Jesus revealed Him in the character of a *Father*. He taught men that they should no longer stand in the distance and appeal to God for aid through burnt offerings and sacrifices, or through the medium of the priests who ministered at the altar in the temples. But that everywhere in the city and the wilderness, in the darkness or the light, on the land or the sea, the throne of God was accessible; that they might go to Him confiding in His love, and call Him *their Father*, and He would own and bless them as His children. He removed the veil that had so long obscured the excellent glory, and taught the world that its God was a God of love; a being whom giving did not impoverish or withholding make rich, and whose goodness was full as the ocean and inexhaustible as the light of

day. He revealed God as a being who is to be loved and trusted; whose care over us is so constant and watchful that not a hair upon our heads can perish without His notice; and not a tear can fall but it is seen of Him. And this goodness of our Father runs through all the events and vicissitudes of life, and stretches out through all the boundless realms of the future, giving us the assurance that, under His kind paternal guardianship, no real evil can befall us.

Now, then, what I wish to say, is simply this. Man is by nature a religious being. He instinctively feels after God, if haply he may find Him; and all history shows that, in every grade and condition of life, he must, and he will, have a God of some sort. If he cannot find the true God, he will carve out an image and fall down and worship that. Jesus teaches the best and the truest and highest idea of God that it is possible for man to conceive; and of all the doctrines of God that have ever been taught or propagated in the world, this alone can satisfy the cravings of man's spiritual nature, and enable the soul to rest secure in the consciousness that the arm of the Almighty and the All-good is ever outstretched to protect and defend. Would you seek after a teacher that can lead you up to the author of your being, and place your spirit in communion with the God that made it, and hush your anxious fears with the assurance that the love of God is with you, and that the arms of His mercy encircle you now, and

evermore, you must find that sacred teacher in Jesus; for in this respect it is true, that "never man spake like this man." If you ask me to leave him, I ask, with emphasis, "To whom shall we go?" Aye, to whom? Where is the wise man or the teacher that can give me a higher or a better idea of God than I can learn of him? There lives no such being upon the face of the broad earth; and until such an one makes his appearance, I hold fast to the Saviour and his Gospel.

2. The fraternity of man is a doctrine of Christ. We are all children of one common Father and brethren of the same great and blessed family. The world is divided into nations, tribes, sects, and parties, between whom there is a constant and exciting antagonism; so that they do not understand that they have a common interest or a common Father.

Man looks upon his fellow-man with repugnance and, perhaps, with hatred. He secs in him a mere mass of total depravity, or, it may be, a child of the Devil and an heir of hell. He believes that he has no part in the love of heaven, but is hated and rejected of God, and he hates him too; and the more he hates, the more he imitates the God whom he worships. Hence come strife, contention, war, fighting, and blood. Jesus lays the axe at the root of this mischief; and his calm voice utters the word that is destined to reduce this discord and unite our great race in one common bond of brotherhood and love. Ye

are all *brethren*. One God has created you. One Father cares for you, and one destiny awaits you, is the magic word that transforms humanity in our view, and makes us look "through mercies melting eye," and "see a brother in a foe."

To whom shall we go for a higher or a better view of humanity than we find here? The relation that man bears to his fellow-man has been a fruitful theme, and in regard to it huge volumes have been written. But none have gone further than Jesus. The idea that our vast race is one band of brothers — that each man is interested in the welfare of every other man — that the blood of a common life flows in all our veins, and a nerve of that same life runs through every branch of this brotherhood, so that when smitten in the remotest limb the pain must shoot through the whole body — this, we say, is the highest, the holiest, and most salutary view of humanity ever taught by mortal tongue or inspired pen. And there is no necessity that we should go away from Christ to learn this. It breathes from all his teachings and speaks from his whole life. If I am told that others teach it, and even that it is the burden of the communications that come in these latter days from the spirit world, all very well; only let them teach it in the name of Christ, and give him the credit due to him as the "author and finisher" of this faith, and I will not object. But I insist that no living man, no spirit of man, living or dead, has gone beyond Christianity in

teaching the fraternity of our race. That no *new* truth, as regards the brotherhood of man, has been revealed by spirits in the flesh, or out of it, since the days of the Saviour. His religion is therefore all-sufficient, and we have no need to turn away from him to follow any other guide.

3. The doctrine of life and immortality was taught by the Saviour.

If a man die, shall he live again? This is the question that has agitated the world from the beginning. The sages and philosophers of old pondered it long; but they found a veil over futurity that their vision could not penetrate. They framed theories, indeed, and faintly hoped that they might live when their bodies should be in the grave. But that hope often faltered; and, in its best aspect it was so mingled with fables and superstitions of Erebus and Tartarus, that the life itself was a thing to be dreaded rather than coveted or desired.

In two respects, at least, the teachings of Christ are superior to all others upon this subject. He announced the doctrine of life and immortality as a fixed fact, resting upon the will and purpose of the Eternal God to raise man from the dead, and admitted no doubt of the consummation of this purpose. Nor did he rest satisfied with the mere announcement of this great truth *in theory*. On the contrary, he went himself into the grave, and rose in the freshness of immortal life; and thus gave, not merely the *theory*, but the *demonstration* of the fact that there is a resurrection

from the dead, and assured us that, "as believers, we shall live also."

But the great blessedness of his teachings, in this respect, lies in the fact, that the future life revealed by him is one of glory and bliss immortal to all our race. Those who obtain that world are "equal unto the angels, neither can they die any more, but are children of God, being children of the resurrection." In the light of the Gospel we look forward to the future, and contemplate the condition of man *there* as one of blessedness and felicity unalloyed and eternal. Those who are there were once in the world and surrounded by all the ills that flesh is heir to. But now they are equal unto the angels; and to them there is no more pain, disease, or death, neither sorrow nor crying. They were here mortal, but there they are immortal. They were weak here, but they are powerful there. Here they were corruptible, but there they are incorruptible. Here they were dishonorable, but there they are glorious; and what I affirm, is, that no teacher has ever given to the world better or more glorious views of the future, or taught doctrines better calculated to inspire humanity with high and animating hopes, or to give more of comfort to the afflicted under the trials and afflictions of life. In my judgment, these teachings of Christ are all-sufficient to satisfy the wants of man, and give him hopes full of immortality; so that there is no necessity for leaving him to follow others in search of a hope that

shall be as an anchor of the soul. I know not what the experience of others may be, but I have passed through the furnace of affliction. My loved ones have one after another gone from my sight, so that to-day, of those I have cherished most fondly, there are more in heaven than remain to me on earth. I have found the Gospel of Christ an open fountain of comfort, and the more closely I have bound it to my heart, the more abundant have its comforts been. I have believed and been sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that his teachings are all divine. I have inquired of him for the fate of my kindred, and have been assured that they live. By faith in him I have been able to see them in that blessed land, where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." I see them through the veil, indeed, but yet see them by faith, a goodly company, their robes all white as angels' vestments, and their harps tuned to songs of joy and gladness that make the music of the paradise of God. I know it is well with them, and yet a little while and I shall be there. I have said to my soul, it is enough; I will wait in the patience of hope until my change come. I would not even have that veil removed, lest the full splendor of that world should render the present dim and uninteresting, and thus make me tired of this tabernacle and impatient of the delay. Better it is, in my view, to walk by faith, than to attempt

to reverse the divine order in an effort to walk by sight.

To whom shall I go for a better faith? Lord, I believe in thee, help thou my unbelief. I shall be told that there are many who have not this faith in Christ, and therefore they have need to be taught of others, and must seek an insight into the eternal world by other means.

Doubtless there are many who have not faith in Christ; but that is not his fault, nor the fault of his religion; nor does this lack of faith on their part argue the inadequacy of his teachings to meet the wants of man. Undoubtedly, this lack of faith in Jesus is the real reason why so many turn their backs upon him and seek for hope elsewhere. They have professed faith in Christ long, perhaps, but they have not half believed him. And for this reason their faith falters, and they seek to strengthen it by following those who teach not after the manner of Christ. Let them hold on to the Saviour. Let them nurture and cherish their faith in Christ and cleave unto him. Let them, at least, lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel, ere they proclaim that gospel inadequate to their wants. Not until a man has tested the power of faith to the utmost, and proved by experience that it will not meet the wants of the soul, is he justified in casting it away; nor even then, unless he is well certified that there is someting better that is accessible.

Hold fast, then, the profession of faith without

wavering; and when temptation comes and urges us to depart from Jesus, let the question be, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

LET US PRAY.

COMMAND thy blessing, Father Almighty, to rest upon us ere we part. Sanctify to every one of us the instruction of this sacred hour. Make Christ the one altogether lovely to our souls. Let his sufficiency be felt, and the superiority of his teachings be acknowledged, in every heart. Help us to rest in him — to cherish his truths with an unreservedness of faith which shall bring us the joy of true communion with him. Keep us from straying after any strange teacher — from following any false light — from distrusting the all-sufficient Saviour.

Help us to walk daily in Thy fear — to live constantly to Thy glory — and, in Thine appointed time, to die in hope of a glorious immortality. We ask it through Jesus Christ. Amen.

LESSONS OF ADVERSITY.

BY REV. WM. S. BALCH. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ISA. XXIII. 1–14; ROM. XII.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.
PSALMS CXVIII. 8.

THERE are times in the experiences of all men, when they will distrust themselves and their equals, and seek aid and counsel from some superior source. It has always been so. Hence, to supply this need, there grew up in ancient times classes and professions of men, who pretended to speak by oracular wisdom. Egypt had her priesthood, which, from the adytum of her massive temples, uttered counsels for the credulous. Judea and the surrounding nations had their seers and sacrifices — Greece had her sacred caves and oracles, from whose disguised and double tongue the people sought instruction. Rome and all heathen lands had their ministries and their forms. Even our Indians have their "medicine men" who explain the dark and reveal the doubtful. These all mingled knowledge and prophecy with religion, and sought to instruct the people in reference to the ways of Providence, to their conduct and their destiny. They were at fault

mainly because they took a narrow and partial view of God's dealings with men, and claimed for themselves the ability and right of intercession with the Supreme Divinity to do for them whatever they might ask. They thus obtained a mastery over the wills and conduct of those who accepted their authority, which they not infrequently abused to the promotion of their own interests, and the disgrace of their professions. As knowledge increased among the nations and the light of civilization became more widely diffused, the people became less credulous, and the influence of the priests was much diminished in respect to their pretensions of superiority in averting the judgments of Heaven, and placating the favor of the gods they adored.

Still there remained the same want in human nature—the same imperious demand for some higher source of happiness than earth can afford—some light above the mere intelligence of human discernment—some trust more than can be safely reposed in a fellow-man—a poor, weak, frail mortal, like himself. The faint heart grew fainter, the dim eye more dim, and all creation, overhung with the drapery of darkness, grew darker every day, till He who was to enlighten every man who cometh into the world appeared in the glory of the Father, to reveal the ways of God to men, and "make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers, in

heavenly things, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." Once receiving the faith of God, the mind obtained a support sufficient to bear it up under all troubles, and give it confidence, peace, and triumph in the hour of greatest adversity.

Christianity claims to be a revelation from God "sufficient for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." It shows us the Father, and explains the wisdom, perfection, and benevolence of all the methods of His government. While it admonishes all men of their weakness, rebukes them for their sins, and commands them to hate and forsake them; it removes the thick barrier which intervened between the purposes of God and the misfortunes and miseries of the present life. It places before the believer a good, wise, powerful, almighty Being as the supreme object of love, obedience, and worship, in whom all confidence may be safely reposed, and in whose presence there is life and pleasures forevermore.

Such, my brethren, is the religion we profess. Such is the doctrine we have learned from the New Testament—a doctrine which sufficiently explains the mysteries of our being in reference to the things of time and of eternity—a religion admirably adapted to the wants of the human soul while contending with the misfortunes of earth, and passing the ordeal necessary to the full development of our whole character.

Every student of the Bible will learn from it the

sublime lessons of Divine Wisdom which are easy of comprehension, at least so far as they apply to the positive interests of this world; and will, with a small portion of faith, find himself included among the objects of its grace; a subject of its promises and commands, and bound by the most sacred considerations to trust in the one and obey the other.

It has long been a wonder to me that the practical utilities of the Bible are so little understood and so much neglected. When we consider the design of that Book and its peculiar fitness to meet and supply the chief wants of all men—when we remember that it is a sure guide to peace and prosperity by the pathway of humble and honorable effort; a comforter in all our afflictions; a counsellor in all difficulties; the reconciler of all hearts; the friend in distress; the revealer of life; the light-house of eternity,—I cannot explain why men should cast it from them, as a worthless thing, to grasp after the vain and shadowy deceptions of ignorance and sin. We all feel the need of such aid as is there afforded. We have all learned how vain are the helps of earth; how utterly insufficient is the strength derived from the flesh; how worthless the confidence of man when the soul is struggling for its highest good. Earth has no power and friends no wisdom to meet the highest demands of our nature. There is in every soul a wish, a want, a longing after something more — higher, brighter, better, more lasting, than this world can give. It is the finite crying unto the Infinite—the

child seeking his Father—the mortal longing to be clothed with immortality!

Of this fact all are aware; and yet, for many, how strong, how overpowering, are the earth-influences about them! How continually are they kept back from pursuing their greatest good; dragged down and enslaved by the love of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. Their whole lives are choked by the tares sown by the enemy of all righteousness. They find neither time nor disposition to seek what most concerns their peace, their happiness, and true honor—the knowledge and love of God, and obedience to his commandments; the adoption of the rules of religion in the regulation of the conduct of their lives.

The explanation of this unfortunate fact may be found in the falsities taught for Christian doctrine in past ages; in the almost complete divorcement of religion and its duties and rewards from the actualities of the present life. To be religious was needful only in reference to another world—a positive hindrance to success and enjoyment in the present. And the belief in such doctrine still prevails too extensively among men, as may be seen by the habitual disregard of the most positive duties of true religion, the impiety and worldly-mindedness so common in all ranks and conditions of life. We have only to contrast our feelings, purposes, and condition, with what they should be—with what they *might* be, were we faithful to our convictions and opportunities—in order to comprehend the full

force of those lessons which God would make plain to us in the teachings of his word as in the events of his providence. And it is as truly the lesson of religion and philosophy, as it is the dictate of common prudence, that a careful study of the divine commands and strict obedience thereto, should be pursued as the only means of attaining to the highest sources of human happiness and honor. We cannot hope to find permanent pleasure in a course of sin. No one expects it there; nor can it be found in any condition of worldly prosperity where the truth and love of God are unknown. Friends cannot bring it to us. Wealth will not purchase it, nor worldly wisdom show us where it can be gained. Why then should we "trust in man" or in princes? They cannot bring peace to the troubled spirit, nor calm the anxieties which will rise from the revulsions and adversities common to the affairs of this life. It is better to "trust in the Lord" from whom comes all our strength. He is gracious and full of compassion, delighting in the repentance and salvation of His children; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto Him and live. He has made plain the path of duty before all men, given them His commandment, written His law upon the tables of their hearts, and placed before them every persuasion to truth and a holy life, in order to accomplish for them the greatest good possible in this life, and prepare them for immortal happiness in the world to come.

I. The first lesson I would deduce from the ad-

versities of life is suggested by the language of our text; viz., that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." More is signified in this simple remark than may be at first apparent.

To trust in the Lord implies some knowledge of His will and works, and a hearty approval of them. We cannot trust in one, in the goodness and integrity of whose conduct we have no confidence. On a man given to change we place no reliance. We must believe that God is good and wise and unchangeable in His dealings with men; just and right in all His ways; and that He will overrule all things to answer a benevolent design,—or we cannot repose implicit confidence in Him. And such God is represented to be in all parts of His dominion. "He is without variableness or the shadow of a turning." "He is of one mind and none can turn Him." "He is the Lord and changes not." Therefore do the sons of men put their trust in Him.

But we must be careful to observe that God acts by "general, not by partial laws." We cannot with propriety expect Him to prosper us in evil, nor to justify us in wrong. The man or government that should do so would not command our confidence or respect. Much less would He who rules the world by the spirit of His holiness, and is no respecter of persons, but renders to all their dues, "to every man according to his works." We cannot ask His blessing on our wicked ways and works; that He will help us accomplish our base and selfish designs. Even the thoughtless

and profane do not do that, though they do, in in their folly and sin, ask Him to curse their enemies — to damn their fellow-men.

Why then should we be astonished and wonder when our worldly purposes and proud aspirations are not all successful — when we fail in our courses which are not according to His will, but opposed to the methods of His government and hostile to the welfare of our fellow-men? We certainly do not seek His counsel when we devise mischief. We do not seek His protection when violating His commands. Hence we ought not to expect prosperity when living without His fear, and in disobedience of His laws.

To trust in the Lord is simply to assent to the methods of His government, to live and to do His will, according to His commandment. We neither ask nor expect a just and good government to protect us in evil, or shield us from the punishment of our crimes. We trust in the Lord to fulfil His promises and carry out, with exact uniformity and equal justice, His perfect laws. When, therefore, individuals or communities who have not God in all their thoughts, do not heed His laws in all their works, but openly and boldly transgress them, by their dishonesty, worldliness, pride, ambition, oppression, "hatred, variance, emulations, wraths, strifes, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revilings, and such like" — when such are overtaken and suffer for their faults, we must not repine and say it is the heavy hand

of God, raised against His people for their hurt, but an admonition for them to return unto Him — a lesson to persuade them to change from their waywardness and ask wisdom of Him, "who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." It is rather a reason to continue our trust in Him, a persuasion to live more conformably to His statutes, to do whatever He has bidden us, and to beware of all transgression and carelessness in pursuing the commonest affairs of this life. When we do His will and ask in faith, "we are sure that He heareth us," and will grant our petition. We trust in Him. But when we prefer the wisdom of the world and follow cunningly devised fables, and pursue the paths He has forbidden, our trust is practically withdrawn from Him: our faith is gone — we prefer another. An evil day will certainly overtake us; for He will give us the work of our hands and the fruit of our doings shall be rendered unto us.

II. Our second lesson is that neither our duty nor our happiness should be sought in the exclusive pursuit of temporal prosperity. It was long ago said, "that riches make to themselves wings and fly away;" that "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase." "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."

All human observation and experience fully verify these sayings. Every body knows, because every body feels, the need of something more than merely the treasures of earth. However great the importance we may attach to our earthly possessions, and however honestly, and ardently, and successfully we may seek them, we must all acknowledge a superior want of our natures which cannot be supplied by them. The body and all wordly desires may be surfeited with them, but the soul will hunger and thirst after something more, something better, more like itself, more divine. There is a want within craving the bread of heaven, and "crying out for the living God." That want must be supplied; that cry must be answered. In these last years — yea, from time out of mind, too much of human thought and effort has been devoted to material objects. Great and astonishing advances have been made, a wonderful creative genius has been displayed, and marvellous improvements have taken place in the rapid interchange of thought and the comfortable and certain transport of people and commodities from place to place. The intellect has been spurred on to the vastest enterprises and has achieved the most satisfactory results. But *moral* and *religious* culture has not lead in the van, but, in many, if not in most cases, it has lagged far behind. Changes, almost revolutions, have taken place in many minds and in most sects; but the religious *feelings* have not been deepened, and the moral convictions quickened to

a deeper sense of the abiding presence of God, in a way to beget a more reverent piety and a holier living. The great purpose of life has not been sought in obedience to God, in the moral elevation of the soul, in the cherished hope of a holier and happier life.

Too large a portion of time and talent has been given to the obtaining of the means of a display conformable to that strange thing called the "Spirit of the Age," and not always in strict conformity to the commandment of God, or the dictates of an awakened conscience. Look at the great changes which have taken place in almost every department of business and of living, within the memory of all of us. Note the rapidity, extravagance, and recklessness, with which both are pursued. Compare the store-houses and dwelling-houses of to-day with those of ten, twenty, and fifty years ago, and the rents and household expenses with those of that period, and tell me if the tendency has been towards the calm, considerate, prudent, humble spirit of the Religion we profess. I know it is said these fine stores, splendid dwellings, and magnificent churches make employment for the people and scatter wealth among the poorer classes. I doubt such logic, for two reasons: first, it lays up so much capital which is henceforth unproductive, when it might better be actively employed; and second, it creates or widens the distinction between the rich and the poor, awakens pride and envy, and stimulates the desire in others to make

any effort and at almost any hazard to obtain equal degrees of comfort and elegance.

The dilapidated palaces of Genoa, Venice, Amsterdam, and many other waning and ruined cities of the old world, tell the tale which might be written on the walls of not a few buildings in our own country, in anticipation of a few centuries. Go and seek among the ruins of the great money centres of the world, where commerce has held her marts and merchants were their princes. How truly has the word of prophecy been fulfilled in them! Where are Babylon, Tyre, and Sidon? Where are Corinth, Syracuse, and Rome? The elegance of the fragments dug from the rotting debris, tells how their wealth was *spent*, but no slab arises to show how it was *made!* So also of the cities before named, and of those which are striving for mastery now. The hand-writing is on their walls. The days of reckoning will, at length, come upon all of them.

The responsibility is greater in the employment, than in the acquisition of wealth. To earn is commendable; to use judiciously is thank-worthy. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." To acquire, requires industry and economy; to spend properly, calls into exercise better principles of the heart. A man may grow rich from sheer selfishness, but he cannot make himself truly happy without exercising the kindlier feelings of his soul in the employment of his means and in his treatment of others. May we not, therefore, safely

conclude that more attention paid to the judicious employment of the blessings so bountifully bestowed upon us, would be productive of more permanent good, and save from a thousand anxieties and vexations which attend the inordinate desire to become hastily rich? Should not a larger portion of our time and means be given to the cultivation of our moral, social, and religious affections and faculties, which are to outlive our bodies, and advance forever in nearer approach to the Infinite Holiness? Should we not receive the lessons of adversity as indications of God's disapprobation, and calmly "consider our ways," to see whether we have faithfully obeyed His will, and done what He has required of us? While no one may find cause to distrust the wisdom and goodness of His government, all may discover their own faults, and severely reprehend themselves for devoting so much thought and effort to their material, and so little to their spiritual, interests.

III. A third lesson indicates the importance of confidence in each other. Our text does not forbid this. It only teaches that our first and superior trust should be in God. This world would be what some have thought and sung it, "a wilderness of woe," without society and friendship. And there can be no society, no love, no friendship, no real prosperity, where there is not confidence. And I might add what is equally plain,

that confidence cannot long survive the downfall of honesty.

It is folly to expect confidence without deserving it. A wholesale cure for temporal adversity is a "restoration of confidence among men." Before that is done, some will ask, "What has destroyed it? Was it misplaced?" There is *never* an effect without a producing cause. One cannot easily believe that the financial revulsions and consequent depressions and adversities of which so many often complain, are the result of a *want of confidence*, and at the same time that there was no prior cause for the sudden lack of that essential commodity. No. Confidence must have been so stretched and abused that it grew weak and suddenly gave way. Not that men in such cases impugn each other's honesty, assail their good intentions, or directly accuse them of incapacity. The most we can say of a large portion of business men, is, that they generally over-work their Brains and Means and become commercial fanatics. Some may be knaves from the outset, while others may become so in their endeavor to make a short work of prevailing difficulties; the same as many are made infidels by an over-heated religious excitement. Our whole country, and the civilized world, have been advancing with fearful rapidity in a course of high living — a sort of commercial intoxication, like the man, who, living on artificial stimulants, looks, for a time, hale and hearty, fresh, strong, and active; but, by and by, grows flushed

and bloated, till a delirium seizes upon him, when he shakes and quivers and trembles in every nerve, then reels and falls, and, in his wretched agony, sees visions of monsters to terrify him, look where he will, and imagines every body his enemy, simply because he has been an enemy to himself. He may try to rise, and break away from himself and friends, and trample under foot the laws of his being. It is all in vain. He will rave as a maniac till he dies, or until the forces of Nature, not yet exhausted, recuperate and throw off the burden of his guilt, when, though weak and suffering, he may, with care and temperate perseverance, overcome the evil and regain his normal strength and elasticity. One might hope he would be cautious afterwards, and resist the poisoned bowl. Alas! this is not always the case.

It is one of the evils of all religious and financial excitements and revulsions that they greatly impair confidence in men. Suspicion is ever busy, pointing her long lean finger to this man and to that, and muttering dark words, as she passes the temples of trade and of worship. Not a few become distrustful of themselves. Having acted in all good faith and with honest intentions, and seen their accumulations swept suddenly away like a morning mist, they become doubtful and discouraged, and sometimes give up in despair. They are the inebriates who survive, but do not recover their former strength. The world is full of them.

I know of no sure method to restore confidence but to deserve it. It will not do to shirk responsibility and lay the whole blame on others. You would not ask a man to have confidence in you when conscious you did not deserve it. It would not be honest. And every man should be careful to learn his own condition; should know his means, his moral standing, his ability to fulfil, before he makes the promise. But *he* could do so, had not *others* disappointed him! Very true; but he cannot be inexcusable for pledging other men's fidelity, without first testing its security.

We must not shirk responsibility because others do so. The law is of God, and not in the human rules of traffic. He must not plead what others do, for that would soon destroy all confidence and sink society to the lowest state of social anarchy and barbarism. It would reject the counsel of God.

Credit is a good thing, indispensable in social life; but it is capable of great abuse. Its basis is *ability* and *honesty*. Where these are not, it should never be used. Counterfeits do not long pass current. I have often wondered how men, ambitious of a good character — religious men, who fear God and love their fellow-men, can be so reckless of their credit — can consent to run such great hazards — can put themselves in such positions as almost to invite suspicion and failure. Integrity is a priceless quality, and credit should not be trifled with. Credit should rarely go into

the market, lest it meet with reproach and make no sales.

IV. The last lesson I have time to notice, is the value of a hopeful and loving Christian spirit. In adversity it is no time to despond. It is conformable to the constitution of our natures to possess a double strength in the hour of danger. Few men quail in the thick of battle. Those who were cowards before should be strong men now, and the hope of victory should inspire the greatest courage. Faith in God convinces us that the right shall win, the truth prevail, and peace and order be finally and completely triumphant.

Affliction should not make enemies. It does not. It is surprising what electric power runs parallel with misfortune. Let some disaster befall a company of strangers, brought temporarily together; they do not await the formalities of an introduction to excite the liveliest sympathies in their breasts. A railroad crash heeds no distinctions. Let travellers meet in distant lands and they will not much consider the rules of conventional life, or the confines of sect or nation, ere a feeling of warm and devoted friendship will start up between them. When it was announced that the Central America was aleak and the lives of all were in danger, the passengers no longer heeded the rules of classes and conditions. From cabin, deck, and forecastle, they rushed into line and bailed away for life, each stoutly as he could.

The servant passed the bucket to his master; the American, to the Spaniard; the Irishman, to a Consul — rich men and poor, white men and black, native and foreign — it was all the same. And when the vessel heaved, and rolled, and made her final plunge, one united shriek lingered on the foaming waves, and then went up to Heaven laden with an earnest prayer to the Common Father for mercy upon them all. Proud spirits are humbled by adversity. Those grown immensely rich and arrogant, and forgetful of their true manhood, are reminded of former and neglected friendship, and are glad to devote more time and thought to their moral and social cultivation. Families and communities, grown aristocratic on the basis of wealth merely, become more considerate of display, and learn to regard the proprieties of a Christian life.

It is manifest that the hand of the Lord is in the revulsions and misfortunes that befall us as in the steady increase of prosperity — is as truly in the destruction as in the birth of a nation; in a famine as in plenty; in poverty as in wealth; in death as in life; and that prayer should be made to Him, and His wisdom and grace be sought and heeded, that His providences may be sanctified to the good of individuals, families, communities, and the world; and that all men may learn to distrust their own wisdom and strength, and devoutly seek the Lord, find Him in all his works, and heed his will in all their ways. Let them

do this, and they will soon find that "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

LET US PRAY.

O GOD, we thank Thee for all the evidences of Thy love. In mercy hast Thou watched over us and protected us. When we have slept and when we have waked, when we have loved and when we have disobeyed Thee, Thou has been near us to do us good. Thou hast never afflicted us but for our profit, that we might learn to trust in Thee, the Fountain of all wisdom, and the Source of all strength and safety. When we have wandered from Thee in paths of folly, pride, and sin, Thou hast sent the angel of Thy presence to follow us and recall us to paths of duty and of love. And we pray, Holy Father, that, instructed by Thy word and admonished by Thy punishments, we may learn to keep Thy commandments, and evermore lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. Sanctify this and all the means of Thy grace to the good of our souls, and finally save us and all men, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

EFFECTS OF OBEDIENCE.

BY REV. L. L. RECORD. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ACTS XIV.

Exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. — ACTS XIV. 22.

THE Saviour forewarned his disciples that they should be delivered up to councils, beat in the synagogues, brought before rulers and kings, and hated of all men for his sake; and the apostle's exhortation to his brethren, which forms our text, contains the same sentiment.

The people of Lystra, where Paul had recently been preaching, had been excited against him by certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium; and they stoned him, and drew him out of the city, and left him, supposing he was dead. Immediately after this, he and Barnabas went to Derbe, and there preached the Gospel. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, forewarning them that they must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

So great was the enmity to Christ and his doctrines, that every faithful disciple would be very

sure to incur the hatred of his Master's enemies. Such were the circumstances, that no other result could reasonably be expected. As the Jews had been instrumental in destroying the Saviour, they would naturally be ready to persecute all who should attempt to persuade the people that he was the true Messiah. So he made known to his disciples what they would be called to endure, lest they should be unprepared for such treatment, and so should apostatize when the day of persecution came. And for the same reason Paul made known to his brethren, that they would meet with trials and suffering for the Master's sake; and endeavored to prepare their minds for it.

This tribulation was to come upon them in consequence of the state of the public mind at that time, and not because there is necessarily suffering on entering the kingdom of God; which here seems to mean, entering the community of those who believe on Christ, and conforming to his precepts.

He who believes Jesus to be the Messiah, will strive to walk in accordance with his requirements. This is acknowledging allegiance to him as King and Lord. Whoever turns from sin and serves God, may be said to enter the kingdom of God.

From these remarks it will be seen that the tribulation or persecution which the apostles and early Christians were to suffer, was the result of peculiar circumstances. Now, it is very different. There is no danger of such sufferings at this time on account of a belief in Christ as the apostles

and their followers endured. And it is of very great importance that this point should be correctly understood. There have been so many times when it was almost impossible to enter the kingdom except through tribulation, that many have concluded it is always so; and not a few professed followers of Christ seem to believe that their path is full of difficulties, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, now near sinking in the "Slough of Despond," and anon terrified by lions, and then nearly overcome by the fiend Apollyon. This idea is so impressed on the minds of some Christians, that they are constantly considering what difficulties in life can be regarded as the tribulations, through which, as they suppose, they must enter the kingdom of heaven.

In this way, the young, especially, have been impressed with the idea that obedience to the requirements of the Gospel, is very much to be dreaded, and is to be deferred as long as possible. The strait gate and narrow way which leads unto life, is feared, as though full of difficulties and dangers, as Bunyan represents the way of Christian to have been through the "valley of Humiliation." So often have professed followers of the Saviour portrayed the trials of their lives as peculiar and great on account of their efforts to obey the precepts of the Gospel, that their attention, and that of many others, is always directed to the dark part of the lives of those distinguished men who are mentioned in the Scriptures. They seem

never to think of Daniel without calling to mind his being cast into the lions' den; nor of Job, but to dwell on his severe afflictions. Whenever Noah is mentioned, they think of the suffering multitude alone. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are spoken of, a sense of oppression from great heat appears to affect them; they call up so vividly the burning fiery furnace into which these faithful men were cast for refusing to bow down to an idol. The great honor in which these men were held before they were cast into the burning furnace, does not appear to be thought of; nor their remarkable deliverance and subsequent exaltation. They also seem wholly unmindful of the honor in which the king held Daniel before he was cast into the den of lions; of the fact that God shut their mouths, and suffered them not to hurt him; and of the favor which the king showed him after his remarkable deliverance. But, stranger than all, while complaining of the thorny and rough path in which Christians must walk, they overlook the fate of the wicked men who sought the destruction of Daniel; and they seem ignorant of the fact, that they, with their wives and children, were cast into the same den, and were killed by the very lions which allowed the good man to remain unharmed. They are so impressed with the wickedness and injustice of the multitude for scoffing at righteous Noah, that they pay little or no heed to their destruction by the deluge while Noah and his family were

saved in a very wonderful manner. Job's great prosperity after he had passed through severe afflictions, attracts little attention from those who are ever seeking evidence to prove that obedience to God is here attended with great and unusual trials, which are to be counter-balanced by rewards in another world.

Whenever Jeremiah is mentioned, they seem to see him filled with grief, and hear him saying, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people;" or see him in the, filthy dungeon, where he was cast for his fidelity in reproving the Jews and warning them of what would come upon them, if they did not reform. The sufferings that came upon the wicked king and disobedient nation, appear not to have place in their thoughts. They look chiefly on the dark side of the picture.

The mention of Christ reminds them principally of his fasting in the wilderness, his temptations, the hostility of the Pharisees, his agony in Gethsemane, the desertion of his disciples, Peter's denial of him, and his ignominious death on the cross. The ministering of angels unto him, the testimony of the Father that he was His well-beloved Son, the happiness he derived from faithfully performing his benign work, are all overlooked; and one cannot help sometimes thinking that they regard the Saviour rather as deserving pity, than love and adoration. They regard Paul,

as if he was always suffering persecution without any source of comfort but such as the disobedient have. Now they see him in danger from a mob; and anon a prisoner before a magistrate for preaching Christ and him crucified; and then they call to mind his being let down by the wall in a basket; and again he comes to their mental vision, bound in chains lying in prison. They seem to imagine that he knew no more of the comfort and consolations of the Gospel than they do; forgetting that his confidence in God was so great, that he rejoiced even while in tribulation. That memorable night when he and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God in prison; the shaking of its foundation walls; the opening of its doors; the loosing of every one's bands; the conversion and kindness of the jailor, — are all overlooked in their one-sided view. The joy and rejoicing that the apostles speak of, attract not their notice. That tribulation must be endured by those who enter the kingdom, is one of the most important articles of their doctrine; and every thing in the lives of good men, mentioned in the Scriptures, that does not present a phase suited to strengthen this, passes before their eyes almost unnoticed. The heavy and righteous judgments which are mentioned in the Bible as having fallen upon wicked men, are not suited to their object, and receive but a small share of their attention. The heavy punishment inflicted on Cain, which he said was greater than he could bear, claims comparatively slight notice.

The history of Joseph and his brethren, where obedience was rewarded and wickedness punished, though the day of retribution was long delayed, is not a favorite theme. Had Joseph died in prison where he was cast by the accusations of a false and unprincipled woman, instead of being released and made governor over all the land of Egypt, it would have been of the right shade. Now, the history clearly shows how God overruled and brought good out of evil; how He turned the unjust imprisonment to Joseph's great advancement, and humbled his brethren before him; therefore it does not answer the great object they have in view, which is to make it appear that the righteous have an undue share of suffering here in consequence of their fidelity and obedience to the laws of the Most High, and hence have some claim to be made happy in another life; while the wicked shall be doomed to endless suffering. Such being their constant effort, they say little or nothing of the plagues which were sent upon the Egyptians, because Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go; nor of the miraculous escape of the Jews out of their hands, and the drowning of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea. The recital of these things would not impress the mind with the belief that the path of obedience is a rough way, hedged in with thorns and leading up rocky acclivities, while the way of transgression is a broad and smooth road, which would be far

the more pleasant to travel in, were it not for the fearful place to which it leads.

Should we follow through the history of the Israelites, we should be constantly reminded that sin goes not unpunished, nor virtue unrewarded. When they made a golden calf and worshipped it, the Almighty would have destroyed them, but for the intercession of Moses. When Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire, they were struck dead for their wickedness. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against the authority of Moses, the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up alive. And because the Israelites murmured on account of this destruction, God sent a plague which swept off suddenly above fourteen thousand of them.

Do these things indicate that transgressors go unpunished, while the virtuous are afflicted? No; and therefore they are not so often mentioned as those which are not clearly shown to eventuate in the punishment of the wicked, and the reward of the righteous.

If we read the history of David, we shall find that he was rewarded for his good deeds, and punished for his wickedness. The same happened to the subsequent kings of Israel. Solomon was the wisest, and, in the early part of his reign, one of the best of kings, and he was greatly blessed. As the Jews departed from the worship and service of God, they were afflicted. Their whole history proves very clearly, that 'the way

of disobedience is not the path of peace and prosperity.

But it may be said that this history is not so particular as to show the bearing and influence of personal disobedience under ordinary circumstances, and therefore we must look farther for evidence to settle this point. We are very willing to examine it as carefully as any wish, and to question the personal experience of every individual in relation to it. And that every one may decide understandingly, we will commence in the domestic circle, where all are acquainted, and inquire whether strict conformity to the laws of God is productive of happiness in that sphere.

Duty requires that all the members of the family should exercise the spirit of charity and forbearance; that we should be as ready to render each other happy, as to have our own comfort regarded. The parents are under obligation to do all in their power to lead their children to regard right and shun wrong; and to use all proper means to cultivate their mental and moral faculties. The children ought to be grateful for all favors, to improve faithfully the privileges afforded them, and show due respect for their parents. The parents are also required to set such an example before their children as would be well for them to follow, manifesting on all occasions that charity that "suffereth long and is kind."

If the members of any family strive to attain to this standard, can there be any doubt that they

will find much happiness? No one will, for a moment, hesitate to admit that they will enjoy much greater happiness than the family that disregards domestic duties. Peace and happiness are the constant attendants of those who seek each other's welfare, while they refuse to dwell where discord reigns.

This will be admitted; but, as we are all fallible, and often fall out of the way, even when our general intentions are good, the question may arise, What shall be done when some of the members pay little or no heed to what is expected of them? In this case, the happiness of all is marred, even of those who are striving to perform faithfully every duty. We readily admit this. But we would ask, if the amount of happiness would be increased by retaliating on those who first did wrong? Here is the very point where people err. They are not ready to bear with each other; and so make matters worse by allowing their own feelings to become excited, and treating improperly those who were first in the wrong.

Are those who have erred, less likely to do wrong again by meeting with harshness and severity? If so, we should suppose that not only domestic sins, but that all wrong, ere this, would have been banished from the earth, so ready have people been to try the virtue of retaliation.

If those who do wrong, are not improved by unkind treatment, will it be contended that those who are injured, suffer less by treating the wrong-

doer with harshness? I presume it will be readily granted, that we are made more unhappy by any wrong done us, if we allow it to gain control over our feelings, and guide our actions; thus conceding that neither the injurer nor the injured are made happier by resorting to retaliatory measures, and that the peace of the domestic circle is diminished by it.

But if such a course does not increase the happiness, when only part of the members of the family circle disregard what is due the others, it certainly cannot confer good on ordinary occasions; for usually each one has his turn in being the first transgressor; and, therefore, the wrong circumstances make it the duty and the interest of all to be mutually forbearing; and domestic tranquility and peace require it. And this is so obvious, that none will deny it, who have had opportunity to learn how great a difference there is in the peace and happiness of different families, and have noticed the cause.

That domestic happiness depends chiefly on the efforts of the members to render each other happy, is also manifest from the fact, that some of the happiest families are those who have to labor diligently to obtain even the necessaries of life; while others that have all the conveniences and comforts which wealth can procure, are strangers to domestic tranquillity.

I presume all will assent to the tenor of these remarks; for the case is so plain it needs only

to be stated to be admitted. And if they *are* allowed, is it not certain that the requirements of the Gospel are such as promote, rather than decrease, domestic peace? Do the Scriptures enjoin duties that are calculated to diminish the happiness of home? Will conformity to the command which requires that love should be cherished toward all, mar the enjoyment of the domestic circle? The answers which every one feels must be given to these questions, will satisfy all, that the obligations of a Christian, so far as respects home, conduct through flowery meads, rather than through the dark valley of tribulation.

If the domestic circle is made happier by obedience to the Gospel, it is presumptive evidence that it will have a similar effect on the peace of neighborhoods, for they are like families in many respects. The several members in a community, as well as in the family, have interests in common. No great discord can exist in a neighborhood without affecting, more or less, the peace of all who know it. As the requirement to cherish love toward all, is so far from diminishing the happiness of home that it is indispensable to its peace and tranquillity, we conclude that it will also promote the happiness of neighborhoods. This would be admitted, if the command were universally regarded. But, as all do not endeavor to conform to the spirit of the Gospel, can a single individual strive to do so without diminishing his happiness? Can one struggle to do good while others are un-

mindful of their obligations, and not be made more unhappy than he would be if he should follow the general practice? Can one be treated unkindly and unjustly by those about him, and still endeavor to live in accordance with the command of Christ, to return good for evil, without suffering more than he would if he should indulge the spirit of retaliation?

If we would understand the effect of obedience under trying circumstances, we must have a clear perception of that state of the heart which is indispensable to a faithful discharge of duty; must understand that no one can labor persistently to do good, to mete out justice to his fellow men, unless he cherishes a good degree of love for the human race. And love is indispensable to enjoyment. Banish all love from the soul, and life would be a burden. Therefore he who labors most for the good of man, because he cherishes the deepest love for him, must be the happiest individual.

If one is treated unkindly, if his motives are impugned, if he is defrauded or slandered, what course does his happiness require him to pursue? We well know that he will not suffer any less by giving place in the heart to revengeful feelings; for revenge and happiness cannot dwell together. Nor will his character suffer less by such a course; for every one feels that the unprincipled man is more likely to be revengeful than the upright. It is evident, also, that a retaliatory spirit tends to drive the

wrong-doer farther from the right path, rather than to lead him back; so that neither the injured nor the injurer is benefitted by cherishing an unchristian spirit; thus proving that the commands of Heaven are such as our very circumstances require us to obey, if we would make life happy. Difficult as it may be, at times, to keep the feelings in subjection to the judgment, it is certain that the happiness of individuals, families, and neighborhoods, demands it. No one who has any claim to be called a Christian, will say that his happiness has been diminished by striving to keep passion from his heart, and cherishing good will to all, even those who have sought to do him harm.

The same is true in respect to suppressing envy, pride, jealousy, and other evil passions. He who does not allow them to dwell in the temple of his heart, however hard he may have to struggle against them, is far happier than he who permits them to defile the living sanctuary of the Most High.

Do not these remarks accord with the experience of all? So far as any one has strictly conformed to the precepts of the Saviour, has he not been rendered happier by it? Is it not the tendency of love, which "is the fulfilling of the law," to promote happiness? How, then, can any virtually contend that obedience to God's holy law, is a task to be dreaded? Can it be possible that one whose heart has been warmed by the life-giving rays of Divine love — who has been clad in the armor of

the gospel of the Prince of Peace — can say that he has a hard Master, who "reaps where he has not sown, and gathers where he has not strewed;" who lays heavy burdens on men's shoulders, and so grevious to be borne that they would forsake his service, were it not for the fear of unending woe? The experience of the best men who have ever lived, and of the best men who are now living, and the nature of God's laws, go to prove that all the requirements of the Scriptures, when obeyed, promote our happiness here on earth.

This truth should be painted in letters of light, and should be early and indelibly impressed on every heart. It would prove a bulwark against the asaults of temptation, and do more to induce conformity to God's holy laws, than the thunders of Sinai, or the horrors of the bottomless pit.

LET US PRAY.

ALMIGHTY FATHER, we thank Thee for Thy holy word, our "polar star," to guide our steps through the wilderness of life. Help us to realize that its requirements are wisely adapted to our condition; that no duty is enjoined which we need wish to shun; so that when tempted to turn aside from virtue's path to increase our happiness, we may have strength to resist the temptation.

Imbue us with the spirit of our Master, so that with ready hands and cheerful hearts we shall do Thy will. Guide our feet ever in the path of obedience, the way of peace. And unto Thee the Father, and through Jesus Christ, be rendered ceaseless praise. AMEN.

THE FATHER OUR HELP IN TRIAL.

BY REV. A. G. LAURIE. SCRIPTURE LESSON, MARK IX. 1—27.

There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.—PSALMS IV. 6.

Not many, not any of us, I am confident, find ourselves so jaded and effete with a surfeit of the world, as to be ready, like the Roman Emperor who had exhausted all, to proclaim a reward to the ingenious man who shall provide us with a new pleasure. Our age, our country, the courses along and among which we move, teem too fully with the impulses of action, to suffer any of us to dally long enough, yawning in some rose-leaf corner by the way, to have time and its interests pall upon us. The demands of our families, the excitements of our respective pursuits, are numerous and potent enough to keep us astir and safe from such a paralysis of sense and soul. The paralysis we have to fear, is not that induced by inaction but by overaction — the latter, finally just as fatal to healthy effort and virtuous happiness as the former.

But, in little danger of being reduced in this way to a persuasion of the worthlessness of existence when whirling along in the universal bustle to

which we are each adding our sufficient share, each day hunting down its separate object, perhaps securing it, to resume the chase to-morrow to a like success, or to a failure equally impotent to arrest us, do we never halt at certain movements to think what the final object is on which we are so intent, toward which and our graves we are pressing so eagerly? — whether, if attained, and when attained, it will be adequate to the hot struggle which won it? — and to test its value by the question, "Nothing I have yet seized satisfies me — will it?" I think, at such times, firmly as our foot presses it, suspicion whispers that the world rattles a little hollow under us, and the earthly mist lifts from the earthly life, and it looks thin and skeleton like, thus naked; but the rush of the crowd whirls us on again, and all sounds solid under foot once more, and the mist falls again on the hard sharp lines, and life looks round and full as before. Yet, somehow, one cannot rest, but on, on, as uneasily as ever. Perhaps it is that suspicion is not quashed, but only thrust into hiding, and from its ambush scares away our trust as it alights on successive points of earth, and will not let it settle; and so it flies and we follow, ever on and on forward — oh, if it would only fly up!

Now, I am not saying this to you to depreciate the world, but merely to show you, that, as we ordinarily manage it, what we gain from it, is not what we want.

Or again, when some oft striking pain jars us out of tune with it, or some wearing sickness has wasted out our interest in it, and from the loophole of our chamber, or from some post of compulsory inactivity on its very streets, we behold the race of its thousands, to our disenchanted eyes, the glamor gone from the goal and the prize which crowns it, does the prize seem worth the race, worth the strain of the knit energies that tug men towards it, the vehement absorption of thought and effort expended to gain it? I trow not. We look, and we think, all this, for only that! Yet let the pain depart, the depressing sickness leave us, and all the common paths and pursuits fill up with returning interest, and the glamor descends upon the goal again and glitters from the prize.

But my object at present is not to decide whose estimate of life is the true and sound one, that of the sick man, or that of the man in at least bodily health. The one, no doubt, in his distress, is longing for restoration and the free play of his faculties, as the chief good the world can give him; those faculties, which, once restored, will be launched into the very strife his bedroom philosophy disparages. I do not forget the distich;—

"When the devil was ill, the devil a monk would be,
When the devil was well, the devil a monk was he."

The other, on the contrary, thinks, no, feels — except in those pauses of which we spoke, when certain suspicions startle him — that the world

and its gains are investments which justify his fullest outlay; that one gain being secured, it excites, and very properly, to the attainment of another beyond; and that only when the last is gathered in, may he fitly sit down and rest. Ah, and I remember that the experiment has never been so fully proved, as that from all the millions who have tried it, any one has stood up, crowned with a result of complete success, to say to us, "Yes; I am satisfied; I have found the perfect good." Therefore all I would have you deduce from what I have said, is, that everywhere, and in all time, in action or in contemplation, in the world or aside from it when by some cause forced aside, men have been searching for that which is good.

The corollary from this deduction I suppose is, that this good, this satisfactory something, exists somewhere. If, with our present powers of reasoning and without any actual knowledge of such a thing as food, we were to find all men hungering with the appetite which craves it, I think we should very naturally conclude that somewhere food was to be found. The existence of the appetite presumes the existence, too, of that which shall satisfy it. The argument is trite, but none the less sound. The fact that we see, implies the existence of objects to be seen; that we hear, of sounds to be heard. In any scheme of a provident God, the instinct indicates the reality of its correspondent object. Now, as we have been showing you, men are every where on the search

for a good that shall suffice them. That good then exists, and in this state of being too, or the God who ordered it, has in this one instance made an exception to His otherwise universal rule.

Nay, we find we are already a step in advance of this. For, suppose men beset with hunger, yet so situated that what they seized to appease it, did not satisfy, but only tantalized it; should they, therefore, as reasonable beings, desist from their quest? Or, turning to other substances than those already found insufficient, prosecute it till they attain its object? And, assured by an equally significant instinct that there is an aliment of the soul; assured, too, by all experience that it does not lie in the attractions of the visible world, let us turn elsewhere to seek it.

There is a world no less real than that which is seen, which need not be divorced from it; which, in the life of all its leige subjects, is identified with it; which lives and fills it, as the metal the mould; and which penetrates and circumfuses all its experience and circumstances, as the ambient air, the globe we tread. And, since not in things outward the supreme desirable is to be found; and since yet it *is*; since by the testimony of an inerrable instinct, an instinct felt in a universal want and expressed in a universal search, it does exist,—the invisible contains it. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

Aye, here, indeed, in the light of God's countenance, is the true elixir of life; the golden secret; the pearl of great price; the hidden treasure which Adam lost long ago in Eden—that day when no longer he saw the face as wont, but heard only the voice of the Lord God walking among the trees of the garden—and which His millions of children have ever since been seeking. And still it shines in Eden; for wherever it is seen to shine, it makes an Eden. And while upon the lines of their lives to whom it is invisible; who are searching unconsciously for it; and, with the scintillations which sparkle from earthly gauds, are trying to cheat those souls of theirs which will be sanctified only with the fulness of the fountain of light,—confusion waits, and darkness broods, and labyrinths stretch away only to stop suddenly on the brink of unlit graves; those on whom it is uplifted and over whom it shines continually, lie, under the eyes of the angels, like the landscapes of Heaven. Their enjoyments stand up in inexpressible brightness; for they bask not only in the common sunshine of earth like those of others, but are flooded, too, with the light of a more lustrous glory from His face. And not on these hill-tops only even where the shadows fall, there is light. And just as the dark moss-tufts in the wood-walk, dull and brown in themselves, yet kindle into rich, deep hues under the rays which struggle through the foliage steeping them in beauty; so, on those signal spaces of sin that

are foliaged with repentance, that face pours its beams of pardon; and on grassy mounds where other shadows lie at intervals, veiling not quenching that lustre even when first they fall; and by degrees it touches them with a glow so soft, of hope, and tender, of regret, that no true heart, however it may have sorrowed, could bear to change those mellow shades for the garish splendor of the world's best gladness.

"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." Let us pray this prayer. But in praying it, let us mark well its words.

I do not think there is one man or woman in this assembly over whose life God's countenance is not lifted up, if not steadfastly, sometimes, perhaps frequently. Else what brings you here? Is it not to set the face of God, visibly, in your own sight, over against your heart, that He may scan and try it, and tell you of its state, what its sins, where its dangers and its duties? I can conceive of no other than some such purpose which should bring here any sincere person among you. And your frequent appearance here is therefore an indication, an assurance to me, that often during the week that face rises upon your course, and is seen and acknowledged by you as the Director of that course, as the Censor of its short-comings, and the Master to whom its tasks are due. Ah, but this alone is a stern attitude in which to place your God, and a hard and ungenial one in which to place yourself in relation to Him. And while from

such an aspect, so rigid and exacting, you gather looks of command, and under it attempt to pace the path of obedience, you will either push your advance along the level of a very ordinary morality, or, if you try a higher walk, you will find the commands difficult of discharge, and the path a weary one, and wonder how people talk of a religious life as a pleasant one.

There are thousands of men in all Christian churches, many such in our own communion and under our own faith, emptied, as it is, of all the horrors which blacken such a life to others, who are to-day trying to tread the road of duty, and finding it, not occasionally, not frequently — *that* the most favored do — but habitually, a road fertile of tasks and pains, and penurious of happiness. Where lies the trouble? You must go up higher.

When Christ and the chosen three were on the Mount in heavenly company, a cloud, we are told, enfolded them. Above, it was flushed with the glory of God, and the four were there. But to the spectators below, it was but a common cloud. And there were nine disciples upon that plain in high and unsuccessful contest with the scribes, the Evangelist assures us, just as we in a like position with our troubles, our tasks, our sins. And looking for succor to their Lord, they could see the cloud only, and its lower side of shade, and, perhaps, dimly through its folds, the distorted shadows of its blessed tenants. Hard-pressed and cheerless, they were standing silenced and discomfited, when, with

the light of the transfiguration still glistening on his brow, himself appeared, and their foes fell back in amazement, the people worshipping. So, sometimes, to be sure, does God break forth upon the painful disciple of duty in the plain, to rescue or to support him.

But it is those upon the height, who, unchilled by the darkness under the cloud, and unafraid of the shadow of Him, who, though light and love above, yet looks terrible through the darkness under, — it is *they* who are with Him in the holy Mount, who see His glory, and make their tabernacles in His presence, and abide with Him; who go in and out before Him, and walk in His paths, finding them arduous — oh yes, often — but always full of light. For why? They pray Him "to lift up His countenance upon them?" Yes, but they pray, too, in the full words of the petition, and they cultivate the while the receptive disposition in their hearts which absolves and improves the fulness of the granted prayer, that "He may lift upon them the light of His countenance." If hitherto we have seen that face from the plain only, in shadow through the cloud, and in it the lineaments chiefly of the Maker, the Sovereign, the Judge, let us go up higher; let us in the strength of an ambitious, yet humble faith, and with the confidence of a filial love, scale the summit; and the cloud shall lie beneath us; and, above it and within it, we too shall hear a Father's voice saying, This is My beloved Son!

To live in the light of His countenance, we must live near Him; not far beneath Him, looking up to Him chiefly as our Monarch and Taskmaster. These offices He holds to us surely. But we are most likely to establish them in efficient sway over us, and to fulfil most effectually the duties they impose on us, when we take Him into our hearts with all the claims He holds upon us as our Heavenly Father. We may struggle very earnestly under His countenance set up in rigorous superintendence of our lives, to give Him our best obedience as His subjects, and yet fail — fail with a consciousness of failure, and a perpetual recurrence of self-reproach. But let us try in simple love to be His affectionate and faithful children, and if we succeed, and we shall if we try sincerely, then all our duties as His subjects are fulfilled in our service as His sons, and we walk not only under the supervision and guidance of His countenance, but in the light of His countenance lifted up and shining continually upon us.

Let us pray, then, and let us try in action to do our part towards carrying that prayer into effect — "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." In our daily business let us beseech this guidance. When the world goes well with us, let us walk humbly in that light. And when reverses come, reverses which strike our sails aback perhaps along with those of hundreds more, while many are looking wildly abroad for succor, crying, in despondence, Who will shew us any

good? and seeing, only gloom, and finding only wreck in the prevailing storm, let us as children of the Father over all, look to Him, and cry to Him for His light and His deliverance. The deliverance He may withhold; the light He is sure to give if we are what Christ calls His "children of the light." "Time and chance," says the wise man, "happen alike to all; to the good no less than the ungodly." But if, like upright Job, in the strength of God we say, "Till I die, I will not move my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live," then in the same strength, and recognizing Him as the arbiter of our fates, we shall also be fortified to cry, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." And again, in the language of the holy Word, our re-assurance shall come — and what in time of trouble speaks so fitly to us, as it? — "Thy light shall break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, here I am!" Ah, in that "*Here I am*," Here, I, thy keeper, thy God, thy Father, am; thine still; thine expectations disappointed, thy schemes all ravelled and ruined, here I am, thine, thy stay and refuge. In this, what comfort, what support, what heavenly salvation, amidst earthly distraction or disaster.

Keep thy heart my struggling brother; unless it can reproach thee, it need not sink. In act do all man may for extrication; and in patience and prayer commit thy distress to Him who is thy present help in time of trouble. Thy path may be difficult; it cannot be dark, if His countenance be uplifted upon it, and the light of His face be shining. And relief will come, too, if not in *your* way, why then in a better; for it will be God's way. And your name shall shine out clear in the sight of men, your heart shall all the while beat quietly under the search of the accustomed eye of God, and there shall be no one to make you afraid.

LET US PRAY.

Very Merciful God, Our Heavenly Father, fill our hearts, we pray Thee, with the love of Thy children for thee; and keep us, in the strength of that love, in every worldly task, and through every worldly trial, to serve Thee; and grant us, Holy Father, through all temptation, and throughout our earthly lives, to walk only in the light of Thy countenance lifted up upon our way. And, at last, O Lord, to behold Thee forever in the full beauty of Thy holiness, take us, we beseech Thee, from death to Heaven, through Jesus Christ, the Resurrection and the Life. Amen.

THE DIVINE PROTECTION.

BY A. ST. JOHN CHAMBRÉ. SCRIPTURE LESSON, HEBREWS XIII.

For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
HEBREWS XIII. 5.

SUPPOSE, for a moment, we could take a human being with fully developed powers and relatively perfect attributes, but without experience, and place him suddenly in the midst of this world. Having thus placed him here, suppose we cause to pass before him a panorama of the ordinary experiences of human life down to the moment ere he falls into the silence of the grave. That panorama would, of course, be diversified. Admitting, however, and showing clearly and boldly all the pleasures and joys which in the course of his existence he *might* have, and yet hiding not the *dark lines* of the picture, what, think ye, would be his feelings?

In the long march of his earthly sojourn, there would be sickness and danger, mental cares and sorrows, tearing of heart-feelings and crushing of soul-aspirations, loss of friends and anxieties in business, and a "thousand and one" other trou-

bles and calamities; all of which would lie like an incubus upon the breast, making life oftentimes a bitterness and burden. Suppose, also, that with all this before him he should be assured that he must pass through them by his own unaided exertions, and sustain them in his own might and by the strength of his own right arm, depending, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, only upon his own exertions and resources. Think you, in that case, that he would be willing, calmly and joyfully to undertake them and abide by all their consequences? Of course, in all this, the supposition is that there is no higher Being or Power than man; nothing to *help* in any way, to guide, or direct; or to overrule mistakes, sorrows, or sins, and educe from them eventual good.

Lay open before your minds, life as it is, as it generally is in the experience of all men; heap up those experiences, so far as the shadows are concerned, and then deprive the world of aught else than man; and how many are there who would not shrink back appalled, with the fearful cry leaping from the heart, "Who is sufficient for these things?" In such a position, however, and under just such circumstances, does the Atheist place the human soul upon the face of this earth—alone and friendless, to battle with all adverse events, to suffer and endure, unless his own might shall be sufficient to sustain or redeem.

Suppose, again, we place man here under the circumstances we have mentioned, but tell him there is a God. Let us then portray that God as watching his every movement, taking note of all his actions, smiling indeed when he does well, but when otherwise, dealing with him in an arbitrary manner, — in a manner cruel and revengeful, — and leaving him to shape out by his own efforts and from the sum of the results of this earthly career, a future existence of endless wretchedness or endless joy; and how many then would be willing to abide the issues? Or, if willing thus to abide the results, how much present peace and happiness would be realized to the soul? Would there not be dread at every turn, fear in every action, anxiety in every change, despair in every calamity, and doubt the most awful in the prospect of the dissolution of soul and body? Thus, virtually, does a large proportion of the Christian Church place the human race in this existence; making life dark, contracting hope, repressing the naturally joyous feelings of the heart, rendering faith impossible, and filling the heart with dismay and trembling in view of the immortal world.

In effect, *all* men are placed in this world with the problems of life before them. They do not always realize their vastness, because they grow up from almost unconscious childhood in their contemplation. Their experiences, however, unfold these problems upon them in ever-lengthening lines and gathering shades; and, in the midst of

their troubles and trials, they again and again realize the need of consolation — of some sustaining power higher and mightier in all respects than themselves. We may safely affirm that this is a universal feeling; an original and intuitional condition of the soul. The cares and sorrows, all cares and all sorrows incident to human life, bear more or less heavily upon all people and materially affect them. With no views beyond them or above them, the soul must lie down in anguish, if not in despair, many, many times in the course of its pilgrimage; and when, in the midst of Christianity, there are held certain views of God and Religion, which make the results doubtful or partial, then is the mind agitated in the most fearful manner — sometimes even to the unsettling of reason upon its throne, and the going out of the lamp of life in utter hopelessness and dismay.

Under these last circumstances, it is evident, so far as Christianity and the teachings of the Bible are concerned, the affirmation of our text, though coming from the lips of God Himself, is practically useless, and might as well be ignored. Indeed, that affirmation is nullified, is a mocking untruth; and instead of reading, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," those words should rather be rendered, "some of you I *will* leave, and some I *will* forsake — leave you and forsake you *forever!*" And, certainly, such rendering would come home to the soul — is really what is affirmed by men, though not by God; and hence, manifestly, since there *is*

danger for some, for even one, the whole race must tremble; for not one could say, "It will be well with *me*; *I* am safe now and evermore."

But what are the facts? We are placed here as dependent creatures, finite, and often helpless in warding off the disasters of time. Naturally and instinctively do we look up for succor from the High and Holy One; and, as believers in God and His Revelation, we feel that unless there is help from Him, there is no help at all. And yet the world stands back and fears to approach near to the Infinite, not only because it has wandered away from Him in the forbidden paths of sin, but also from the cruelly erroneous teachings of much that is called Theology. Naturally, it is to be expected, not only that men and women recognizing no God and no hereafter, but, also, those who look upon the Almighty as partial, and the future as doubtful, should practically ignore the teaching of our text, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. We should be surprised if it should be otherwise; because, from the very fact that the promise does not appear to men to be true—which it certainly is not unless universally applicable, and for all time as well as all circumstances—they cannot appropriate it to their necessities in all its fulness and joyousness.

Nor are these the only ones who, at least sometimes, repudiate these words. Owing to various circumstances, many who cherish our own large faith, being overcome by sorrows or temptations,

with the world at large, imagine God afar off and careless of the transactions of earth, as pertaining to human welfare. They grant, perhaps, that the Almighty exercises a kind of general superintendence over the affairs of the universe, as a whole; but think it is beyond Him, or above Him, or that He cares not, to descend to particulars; especially to interfere with the hopes and fears, cares and trials, plans and aspirations, of His earthly creatures. This is bitterly wrong and erroneous. True, the providences of God are general and vast; but we forget that this vastness is the result of the aggregate of the minute and particular. We forget that God has not thought it beneath His dignity to declare to the family of man, through His own beloved Son, that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered in His sight, as truly as are the stars of heaven; that He not only wings an angel to speed through space on His high behests, but guides the fluttering and falling of the smallest and feeblest sparrow. Of what avail would it be to our souls, if our conceptions of God were only as of a Being silently and coldly evolving mighty results from mighty causes? Our experiences would then mean nothing beyond their mere actuality; and all the vicissitudes of life would be arbitrary and alone. They would never point to aught still further, never appear as means to ends; and thus we would bow down beneath them, crushed by their power, and able to discover nothing bright or beautiful as their eventual result to

our own souls, or to some grand consummation at the last. To think thus, is to think unworthily of God; and, verily, it would be a mockery to the poor and sorrowing, to even whisper that they have been overlooked in their privations and sorrows in the care necessarily bestowed on the vaster interests of the whole creation. Thus, indeed, it might appear to be in the evolutions of events; but thus it is not in reality. And this shall be made clear when events are summed up, and all evil shall be eliminated, and universal good prevail.

It is this that we would impress upon your hearts this day — upon all your hearts. Not because it is a beautifully wrought theory of our own, but because it is clearly set forth in the sacred Scriptures and unfolded in our text; because, moreover, here alone, that peace, resignation, and joy can be found, which will enable us to sustain our souls under every cloud and storm, as well as in the sunshine and the calm. We would engrave the mighty fact upon the tablets of your hearts, that individually you are so precious in the sight of God that He is with you always and forever; that He will never leave you nor forsake you, whatever may befall; that He will bring you out of every trouble and calamity, from whatever cause arising; that He holds you as in the hollow of His hand, supporting when the waves of sorrow roll over you, and bringing you by His own mighty power and grace, and in the fulness of His boundless love, out of the

storm and out of the whirlwind, even to the eternal shores of immortal life!

Beautifully is this unfolded in the text; more beautifully than is generally realized, owing to the poverty of our translation. Every English scholar knows, that, in the English language, two negatives constitute an affirmative. Thus, if it should be said, in English, "I will not *not* forsake thee," it would be equivalent to saying, "I *will* forsake thee" — the one negative thus destroying the other. But every Greek scholar knows, that, in the Greek language, a double negative intensifies and strengthens the negation, rendering it still more decided and powerful. A third negative would make the negation still stronger, and so a fourth, and so indefinitely. If, then, we open the pages of the Greek Testament and read these words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," the light of their import flashes upon us in greater brilliancy and glory than from our English version we can have any proximate, much less adequate conception; for in the Greek there are *five* negations. It is an extraordinary circumstance, but there they are with all their significance, in all their beauty, and with all their far-reaching import. We know of no other instance of the kind where negatives are thus multiplied, — heaped up, as it were, — no, not in all the range of classic literature. But the divinely inspired Paul has used them; and thus, instead of the comparatively feeble utterance of our English, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake

thee," in the original Greek this great and precious promise — great among promises as the *koh-i-noor* among diamonds — reads, "I will not, I will not leave thee; I will never, never, *never* forsake thee!" What could be more beautiful? Think, for a moment, of those five times repeated negatives, applied not to any threatening or stern demand, but by God Himself to a blessed promise; for, says the Apostle, "He has said, I will not, I will not leave thee; I will never, never, *never* forsake thee!"

It is a universal promise, for no soul can arrogate it to itself. Indeed, if it were not universal, then could its joyousness be appropriated by none; for none could know that for them it was uttered. But there is not one word of limitation, either in duration or in number. It stands out from the page of inspiration boldly and emphatically — the promise, the solemn asseveration of that God who is the "Father of the spirits of all flesh," and who "cannot lie."

Observe, further, not only does the text affirm God's perpetual presence with His children, but, in so far as the negatives are concerned, there was no absolute necessity for their use. The sense of the passage would have been complete, and even beautiful, without this repetition. One negative would have been sufficient to state that God would never leave nor forsake His creatures. Hence there must have been design on God's part in the enunciation of this quintuple negation. It was known to God how prone men were to doubt,

and tremble, and forget. He knew that, ever and anon, they would fear He would forsake them. And so He would insure their confidence and trust for all time, by strengthening and intensifying the declaration, that He would be with them and care for them forever. It would seem as though God saw, then, how the unbelieving heart would stagger at the promise; how it would rise up with the objection, "It is too good to be true; I cannot, oh, I cannot, dare not believe!" It would seem as though He saw that sometimes men's faith would be shaken, and they would think Him an absent God, busy with the greater affairs of His stupendous government; and thus passing them by in their wants, dangers, temptations, and sorrows. But He would not have it thus. He would impress every heart acknowledging His existence, that He was not very far from any one of them; that, therefore, they might look to Him for succor, feel His presence, obtain from Him consolation, and know that He was with them for time and Eternity.

Hence, then, there is left no more room to the world for doubting God's ever-present and everlasting care, either for ourselves or others. Nor need there be any more fear; for, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who now can condemn? Who pluck us out of His hands? Who thwart His will? Who contravene His promise? Who turn us from his strong protection? No one! No

power in Heaven, or in earth, or under the earth; for God is higher and mightier than all!

Thus, evermore, we may have joy rising upon joy, and the prospect of that joy completed and glorified in the immortal world. We may look beyond the present, and see our sorrows and trials swallowed up forever; realize a blessed reunion with family and kindred; feel that God acts wisely and benevolently in all His providences, and is through them accomplishing high and holy ends for every human soul.

We may rest assured that the Almighty will work all things together for our eventual well-being; and everywhere, at all times, and under whatsoever circumstances of life, we may hear what the Infinite Father says to us in the text,— "I will follow thee through life, and be with thee whithersoever thou mayest go; I will lead thee by thy right hand, and only for thy good shall harm befall thee; in sorrow I will be with thee, and will not forsake thee; through the floods I will support thee, and through the valley and shadow of death thou shalt lean upon Me; for this is the promise which I make unto thee, and unto all, 'I will not, I will not leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee!'"

LET US PRAY.

BLESSED FATHER: We thank Thee for all Thy great and precious promises. We thank Thee that in all times of distress and tribulation we may cast ourselves upon Thy care, in the full

assurance that thou wilt not leave us, nor forsake us. Very precious is this truth unto us; and we pray that through it we may be sanctified unto Thee, a "peculiar people, zealous of good works." To Thee we commit ourselves, Holy Father, now and evermore. Guide us and protect us through life; and then bring us to Thyself in glory; and in the end unite us with all the children of earth, redeemed and glorified, through the riches of Thy grace in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THE TEST OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

BY REV. ASHER MOORE. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JOHN XIII.

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.—JOHN XIII. 17.

WHILE all the sayings of our Saviour were significant to the persons whom he immediately addressed, and with reference to the particular time and occasion of his speaking, he still came to be a general instructor — a teacher of man's whole duty throughout every generation. He dealt with principles, rather than with modes of expression, or forms and systems; and he made times and circumstances the occasion for the utterance of truth and the inculcation of duty. And his profound lessons of wisdom and knowledge are not to be bound up within the limit of his answers to a query; nor exclusively confined to the topic immediately in hand when he directly spake to persons who heard the sound of his voice.

The usual method of instruction which Jesus chose to adopt, was that of parables, which were ordinarily suggested by some object or occurrence that was presented to view at the time. It is

well to understand oriental usages, and even the phraseology that was in vogue among the people where Jesus lived and taught on earth. Such knowledge will greatly assist in the right elucidation of the parables of the New Testament. But we should be extremely cautious not to fix the mind too intently and exclusively upon the original application of any Gospel parable. If the Saviour had spoken with no higher or farther object in view than to vindicate his own outward acts, or to silence the cavils of an impudent foe, all that he said during his sojourn on earth, would be of very small moment to us. But he came as much to be our Instructor as the Guide and Comforter of the humble fishermen of Galilee. And the words of spirit and of life to which he gave utterance within the hearing of a little group of astonished auditors, are the words by which the world is yet to be instructed in the highest duties, and conducted to the noblest joys.

Christianity, which is the entire realization of all the religious types and shadows that had gone before, comes to us as the perfect rule of faith and practice, and is abundantly competent to inspire man's best hopes and to be the guide of his life, in every possible stage of human progress. It furnished the first simple lesson that drew close around the Redeemer the despised publicans and sinners of Judea. In the darkest periods of the Church it condescended to the humblest wants of the lowly, and shed all the light upon benighted

minds that their capacities could bear. It has received the highest homage of sages and philosophers in more advanced ages of the world, and been regarded by them as the best lamp to their pathway throughout life. And whatever progress is attained within the whole range of human research, this religion is still in advance of man, inviting him to higher and still more excellent attainments. Its beneficent power is continually exerted over all the enlightened nations of the earth; in the civilization of the world; in the truly reformatory spirit, wherever that spirit may be doing its work; and in the promotion of all the best interests of humanity.

We too seldom reflect upon the amazing results that have been wrought out in the affairs of mankind by the simple religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Many persons are foolish enough to regard the present advanced state of our race as the result of merely natural progress, or of the gradual developments of the human mind, and of the resources of knowledge and happiness which nature has thrown in our way. But they seem not well to consider the fact, that, since the introduction of Christianity into the world, far greater progress is made in a single generation than a thousand years had witnessed before. Look at the thousands of years that had rolled their courses when the celestial visitant announced the Advent of the Messiah, compared with the eighteen centuries that have since been numbered with the past; and

you will see demonstrative proof, that Christianity has brought into this world a regenerative power which makes it at once the highest and the noblest gift that man has ever received from his Maker!

The simple power of this wonderful religion is found in the words and acts of Jesus Christ. "Never man spake like this man;" and his deeds were a clear manifestation of divine agency. God was with him. And he did not merely *improve* existing systems of religious ethics, and show by the mildness of his temper and the wisdom of his instructions, that he was a good man and a great Reformer; but he came to be "the Light of men;" to shine with unvarying brightness throughout the whole dispensation of the Gospel; and to be the Instructor and Guide of man to the latest generation. It therefore becomes us to look with diligent attention into all the recorded sayings of our Lord, and to apprehend, as far as possible, their meaning and spirit.

Our text is connected with a simple history that means more than is really expressed. After eating the last supper with his chosen friends, and knowing that the hour of his departure was come, Jesus laid aside his upper garments, and proceeded to wash the feet of the disciples, "and to wipe them with the towels wherewith he was girded." This common act of eastern hospitality was always performed by servants upon visitors, whose feet had become heated and dusty from travelling in a warm and dry country. There was nothing

unusual about it; and the service required no peculiar gifts in the individual by whom it was performed. But the meaning intended was yet to come. Jesus, therefore, said to his disciples, "Know ye what I have done to you?" They surely knew that he had just washed their feet, and wiped them with the towel that was girded about him. But such knowledge had no particular connection with grave inculcations proceeding from a divinely authorized Teacher of the world. And Jesus continued, "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

We are here taught that true greatness consists in a willingness to promote the comfort and happiness of others. The Lord and Master of men chose a menial service, to give us an example of that perfect kindness of character which it is the genius of his religion to produce. Nothing that is really useful can be dishonorable; and the greatest men of our race are the servants of all. The true character of a man is most fully exhibited in what we commonly call small acts. While the more important deeds of life are carefully studied, and are expected to be made the subject of scrutiny,

small, every-day acts come forth as the spontaneous growth of real character, and show of what spirit the man is. He who is habitually kind in his intercourse with his fellow-men, respectful to inferiors, and gentle in the exercise of authority, is the man whose heart has been touched by the spirit that was in Christ, and who is more excellent in worth than those whose mighty deeds have filled many pages in the history of the world.

We are furthermore taught, in the lesson before us, the great value of an humble character. "Before honor," says the wise man, "is humility." And a greater than Solomon, possessing such power as man never knew, was ready to enter the most lowly dwellings of the poor, to sit at meat with publicans and sinners, and to perform such offices of kindness as belonged to hired servants. If we know the things that Jesus has taught, we must be humble. A true sense of our dependence upon God and of our obligations to man, will make us realize the demands of duty, and urge us to the meek performance of such deeds as shall be approved of heaven. And in works of love, in the obedience of blameless life, we must find and richly enjoy that satisfactory recompense which is ever the good man's portion.

We are still farther instructed, by the subject in hand, that Christianity is not a mere system of knowledge. Our advancements in the Christian life are not measured by the amount of what we know. And additional degrees of knowledge with-

out a correspondingly improving practice, will only augment the guiltiness of a bad character. The servant who knows his Lord's will, and yet fails to perform the manifest duties which such knowledge imposes, is worthy of many stripes; while he who knows not, and sins through his ignorance of right, shall be mercifully spared in the day of chastisement. Saint Paul doubtless set a proper value upon his attainments in knowledge, and felt grateful that his mind had been so enlightened as to enable him to understand the way of life; but he was still ready to declare that though he had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, and had all faith, so that he could remove mountains, without love he was nothing. His highest ambition was to apply all his attainments to the subjugation of his own violent passions, and to the bringing of himself, soul and body, under the sanctifying dominion of right principles of action. He labored for a complete resurrection over the deadness of his past life; and the end which he diligently sought to apprehend, was the perfection of his Christian character, in the entire yielding of himself to the requisitions of duty. Knowledge is but the aid to something that lies still beyond. It may be wickedly perverted to bad uses. And without an abiding principle of right in the soul to give it proper direction, its highest attainments can bring no good to man or to society.

After Jesus had poured his best lessons of instruction into the minds of his disciples; caused them to perceive things which prophets and wise men of old had failed to see, and into which even angels desired to look; and made them to understand all the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,—he was careful to point out to them what should be the great test of their true discipleship to him. "By this," said he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have love one to another.*" And the happiness of which our text speaks, results, not from knowledge alone, but from doing well according to knowledge.

In this view of the matter, you can readily perceive how it is that the ministry of the Gospel is peculiarly adapted to the condition and wants of the poor, the ignorant, and lowly of our race. The chief excellency of Christian character may be well attained by such as are denied the opportunity and the means for extensive acquirements in knowledge. They are capable of apprehending the great law of love, and of realizing, in the true affections of their hearts, the might of its obligations. And when their love to God is quickened into active life, and their sentiments of good will go out with warmth and strength to man, they bear upon their souls the seal of discipleship, and are among the lights of the world and the salt of the earth. "For if there be first a willing mind," the apostle tells us, "it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Intellect-

ual cultivation may well engage our attention; and it behooves us to seek throughout life for an increase of knowledge on every subject affecting our interests and happiness. But goodness is greater than knowledge; and goodness lies within the reach of all.

Let us now glance for a moment at the essential facts that are peculiar to Christianity. The Divine Existence had been faithfully taught and fully believed through former revelations. And Christ came not to teach us this simple truth. But his chief lesson on this subject is, that God is the Father of the human race; that mankind are a natural branch of that great family in heaven and earth, of which the Almighty is the spiritual *Parent;* and that the ties of kindred, by which we are all bound to the Mighty Source of Being, are such as neither life nor death, nor any other power can ever dissolve. This momentous fact is recognized in no system of religion, save that of God's Son. It exhibits one of the highest and best revelations of Christianity. And it was clearly uttered, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," when the Great Teacher, addressing a multitude of people consisting of friends and foes, and men of diverse characters, said, "For one is your Father, which is in heaven." It was reiterated in the emphatic declaration of Saint Paul, that there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." And it runs through

the entire Christian system as the crowning excellence of the whole.

Another fact, intimately connected with the foregoing, and necessarily resulting therefrom, is the universal brotherhood of the vast family of man. As we are all children of the same Parent, we must all be linked together by the ties of a common kindred. And, indeed, with the same breath in which Jesus announced the universal paternity of God, he declared to the multitude and to his disciples, "*And all ye are brethren.*" "We are one body in Christ," an apostle testifies, "and every one members one of another." Christ is the head of this body, we are all parts thereof, and God is the Father of all No diversities of character can break the union; and no separation of time or distance can destroy the integrity of the body. Proceeding from the same source, possessing the same powers and affections, and named of the same universal Father, we are brethren together, and a common destiny awaits us.

And this brings us to notice the remaining fact by which Christianity is distinguished from every other system of religion that has ever been known in the world. It reveals an incorruptible state of existence to succeed the death of mortal men, and announces to us the important truth, that in that state the whole rational creation shall be introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It clears up the entire mystery of life; ex-

plains the ministry of all suffering and affliction in this imperfect mode of being; justifies all the ways of God to man; and imparts to the soul the consoling assurance, that all the ills of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, when we shall reach that immortal and blissful destiny, for which we have been made in the image of God. This fact gives to Christianity infinite worth. It adapts it to wants of our nature that could be satisfied from no other source. When the world has lost its last charm, and our hold upon earthly things is fast breaking loose forever, the knowledge of this fact opens upon the soul bright visions of enduring treasures, and makes us realize amid the loss of the world, that "*to die is gain.*"

Now, are these facts familiar to our minds? Have we learned the whole lesson, so that the measure of our knowledge concerning these things is full? And, above all, do we clearly understand and feelingly realize the importance of all the obligations which a knowledge of these facts imposes upon us? If God is our *Father*, what should be our humble and childlike obedience to every word that he has spoken for our good! If all men are our brethren, how deep and strong should our sympathies be for every creature bearing the human form! And if indissoluble joy shall be the common inheritance of our race beyond the last evil that can harm us, we are fellow-pilgrims, and should constantly have a care that we fall not out by the way!

But if we even know these things fully, and are well established in the present truth, we may well meditate upon the old lesson; while we need constantly to be reminded of, and urged to, the performance of our duty. With line upon line and precept upon precept, we are prone to forgetfulness, and adverse influences will spring up around us to draw away and entice our minds. And we must keep on learning, and learning over again, and meditating upon the same things, as long as we live.

We have heard people speak as though they had mastered the whole science of Christianity, and henceforth had nothing to do but to live upon past attainments. They are willing, perhaps, to support the institutions of religion for the good of others, and for the benefit of the rising generation, and to secure the peaceful observance of the Sabbath day. But, as for themselves, they are familiar with the whole story; they can hear nothing new; and they long ago knew all about the subject of religion. They are especially impatient, when any matter of Christian doctrine is introduced, and an earnest effort is put forth to expound some portion of the word of God. And occasionally a new fangled preacher will appear, to pander to this bad taste, and to attempt great reforms by boisterous and violent assaults upon the sober opinions and decent usages of Christian people. He comes to propose nothing. That is no part of his business. But he condemns with unsparing severity the plain preaching of the Gospel, because there is nothing

novel and startling in it; and he fiercely denounces the best deeds of Christian philanthropists, because they are not ready to join in his mad schemes of disorganization and misrule! The course of such creatures, however, is commonly soon run. Their adherents look in vain for the great reforms that have been promised, and begin at last to perceive that they have been cheated to follow an empty sound, full of fury, but devoid of sense.

To say that we understand all about doctrine, and wish to hear no more in reference to that stale matter, is about the same as to affirm that we know all about duty, and can now with entire safety and propriety withdraw all attention from everything of that kind. And, indeed, these follies commonly run together; or at least the one is sure, after a time, to follow the other. Such talk, my friends, is a very evil sign. It does not usually proceed from such as have made high attainments in Christian knowledge and virtue, and are distinguished for great goodness of life, while they are earnestly desirous to know still more, and to live still better. Nay, *such* persons, having "tasted the good word of God," and increased in knowledge and improved in happiness, by learning of Christ and walking in his spirit, are too sensible of the source whence their highest blessings flow, to turn away in idle chase after phantoms and delusions.

We have all yet much to learn, both in doctrine and in practice. True, we need not perpetually dwell upon the same topic of Christian faith, and

always be urging upon men the same specific duty. Christianity, both in its teachings of doctrine and of morals, presents a wide and varied field for the exercise of the human mind. It furnishes the study of a life-time, and will doubtless be the theme of contemplation and wonder in the better life that is to come! Let it be our study and the rule of our lives, and it will make us wise unto salvation, and thoroughly furnish us unto every good work.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." We have something to *do*, as well as to learn. And, in the performance of the duty to which we have been called, we are promised blessing. "*Happy are ye*" — happy now. Happiness is the proper and natural consequence of obedience to Christ; and may therefore be considered as the best encouragement to do well, and as the meet recompense of worthy deeds. While we are to act from a deep and living sense of obligation and gratitude, it is not unlawful to look to the result of our acts, and to feel incited in the pathway of duty by the hope of increasing our felicity. And there is no fact through which Christianity displays greater power than that which gives the truthful assurance, that the real good of life is found in the way of duty. No man needs to be urged to pursue his own happiness. *That* is what all men are seeking in all their ways. Christianity wars not with this natural feeling of the mind, but merely

aims to direct it aright; or, in other words, to conduct it to perfect success.

The worst sufferings that man can know, result from his wanton violation of his own convictions of right; from deeds of injustice and violence, that shock the better sensibilities of our nature, and leave behind a remembrance more painful than the bitterness of death. And the purest pleasures that we can experience, the highest satisfaction and joy that our nature can feel, result from the deep consciousness of the soul that we have done well; that we have been just and benevolent; and that we have done the very best that we knew how to do.

Such is the plain lesson of human experience, known to us all. Jesus has enforced this lesson by the highest sanctions and the most powerful encouragements. This is the lesson that men most need to learn. And this is the lesson that must regenerate the world.

No mistake can be more fatal to peace and happiness than that which deceives us to believe that our real interests may be promoted by any form of wrong. It is the curse of the world. And much that is taught among men for Christian truth, only serves to give encouragement to the deception. People are urged to sacrifice happiness here, in order to secure still greater happiness in the future world. But we all want happiness now. And it requires feverish excitements and continued alarms to keep people in a way they do not love, and

which is reluctantly pursued only in the hope of finding recompense in the end.

The Saviour has shown us "a more excellent way," in explaining the immediate connection that exists between duty and happiness. If we know what is right, we are happy in doing it. God approves the service, and we enjoy the blessing.

Let this great lesson of experience and truth sink deeply into our hearts, and temper and direct the acts of our lives; and we shall have the witness in ourselves, that great peace have they which love God's law, and nothing shall offend them. Every duty to which we are called, is intimately connected with our happiness by a necessary law of our being. Our Saviour, in the precepts which he uttered, and in the examples which he displayed, aimed to promote our solid welfare. And he has shown us that knowledge is vain, that faith is lifeless, and that hope is devoid of blessing, without that simple and practical goodness of heart and life, which prompts us to do the things which he has commanded. His voice of counsel comes to us through the ages, repeating the same old lesson, and enforcing the same duty, — "If ye know these things, happy are ye *if ye do them.*" Let us give diligent heed to that sacred voice. And then, though we may fail to understand all mysteries, though we err in some matter of doctrinal belief, and though our name may not be remembered among the great of the earth, Christ will own us and God will bless us. AMEN.

LET US PRAY.

FATHER of Mercies and Giver of all good gifts: We thank Thee for all the bounties of Thy Providence, and for every blessing of Thy Grace. And, especially, do we bless Thee for the privileges and comforts of this day. Thou hast permitted us to come together in peace, and to meditate upon things wherewith one may edify another. Grant, Lord, that Thy blessing may now rest upon us, and that every right word that has been spoken may abide permanently in our hearts. Guide us by Thy good Spirit unto death; forgive all our sins; and finally receive and bless us, with all the kindreds of the earth, in the light and joy of Heaven. And unto Thy great Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord, shall be all the praise, forever and ever. AMEN.

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

BY REV. W. H. RYDER. SCRIPTURE LESSON, LUKE X.

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment and wounded him, and departed leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor to him that fell among theives? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.— LUKE X. 30–37.

THE peculiarity of a self-evident truth is, that it depends upon nothing else for the manifestation of its truth; it carries the evidence of its own verity with it. Any attempt to render such a truth more evident, is very likely to end in partial doubt.

The great doctrine which is taught by the parable selected as our text, belongs to the class of self-evident truths. In this view, we are certain that words are not necessary to deepen the conviction which now fastens itself upon your minds,

that the parable of the Good Samaritan states and enforces the duties resulting from one of the primary relations which exist between us as members of a common family. We shall not, therefore, in what we have to say upon our text, attempt to prove the doctrine of it true.

You cannot, however, be unaware that truth professed, is not always truth applied; for however unanimous we may be in acknowledging the correctness of the principle which our Lord sets forth in the parable before us, it is very apparent that we do not make that principle the rule of our lives. Theoretically, no man denies the position that

> "Our neighbor is the suffering man,
> Though at the farthest pole;"—

but, practically, the mass of people do deny it, even in their most deliberate and important acts. If we shall succeed in showing the breadth of the principle stated in our text, and the importance of applying Christianity to the needs and duties of life, our purpose in this sermon will have been accomplished.

The reply of Jesus to the young lawyer is called a parable. Such it probably is; but some persons have thought it a history of an actual transaction. They base this suggestion upon the fact, that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was at that time one of the most dangerous in all Judea. It is singular, that in this respect the character of that

region should remain, even yet, unchanged. At present, it is the only really dangerous route in the neighborhood of the Holy City. Travellers even now take an escort in passing from Jerusalem to Jericho.

The word "*pence*," used in the text, may mislead the reader, if he does not reflect that a *denarius*, or penny, is equivalent to about fourteen cents of our currency; so that two pence is twenty-eight cents. Add to this the fact that money was then much more valuable than it now is, and the material aid given by the Samaritan, will not appear small or insufficient. An English theologian expresses it as his opinion, that fifteen pence English, was worth then more than fifteen shillings English now. It is to be considered, further, that the Samaritan did not dismiss the case after doing this much, but promised to "come again" and "repay" the keeper of the inn, if he spent more than the sum left.

Accustomed as we are to the use of the word neighbor in the sense in which it is employed by our Lord, perhaps the majority of persons are unable to appreciate the feelings of the Jews with respect to the Gentiles, and especially the despised Sect of the Samaritans. The lawyer, in reply to the question which Jesus put to him, says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." This is a quotation from the Law. We

give to these words a broad, liberal meaning; but the Jew did not. He restricted them to his own people, and even justified his hatred of certain nations on the ground that they were not his neighbors. The following quotations from an early Jewish work, will illustrate this point. They are selected from the writings of Dr. Lightfoot. "An Israelite killing a stranger inhabitant, he doth not die for it by the Sanhedrim; because it is said, If any one lift up himself against his *neighbor.* And it is not necessary to say, he does not die upon the account of a Gentile; for they are not esteemed by them for their *neighbors.* If any of them fall into the sea, you shall not need to take him out; for it is said, Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbor, *but such an one is not thy neighbor.*" In this narrow use of the word the lawyer inquires, "Who is my neighbor?" He thought all Jews were his neighbors, but he did not suppose any Gentile was. Had Jesus simply said, "The Samaritan is also your neighbor, little or nothing would have been gained. The intense sectarism of the Jew could be overcome only by the most pointed and forcible form of reply. The parable of the Good Samaritan was exactly suited to such a case, and seems to have broken through the bigotry of national prejudice. But mark the form of the lawyer's response. Convinced that he is in the wrong, but with an ecclesiastical pride too stiff to bend into an acknowledgment of his error, he does not say, with

the boldness of a converted man, The *Samaritan* was neighbor to him that fell among thieves; but, "*He* that showed mercy on him." It seems as if he could not bring himself to use the word Samaritan in such a connection. That was too much, and so he made a kind of compromise with his conscience, as, alas! too many in all ages have done, saying the substance of what he felt to be the truth, but in words that did not shock his sensibilities so much as if he had employed the name of that detested sect. "Go, and do thou likewise," is the appropriate and Catholic moral with which Jesus closed the interview. Imitate that Good Samaritan. Like him let not your love be bounded by sect. Do good to all, to the unfortunate of every nation. In this broad sense you should understand the words of the Law just now quoted by you. There is but one family: to that all nations, tribes, and people belong. Consider yourself, therefore, related to each human being; understand and feel that all men are your neighbors and your brothers; and that all are alike created in the image of God.

Christians of every sect,—here is an important lesson for us. If we differ in faith, as surely we do, let us differ in love. We are all brethren. Intolerance is still a great evil — one of the worst. Be faithful to your sect; adhere to and support your own ideas and opinions; but be willing to allow a like privilege to others. The church has too little of the spirit of the parable of the Good

Samaritan in it. Liberality rightly interpreted is in no way inconsistent with strictness in faith. Jesus believed firmly and fixedly in the doctrines of the Gospel, and taught them with authority; but he was very far from being a bigot, or even from being intolerant. Like him let us believe, and in his spirit, let us teach and labor, doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us.

If a dweller in another world should come amongst us without any previous knowledge of our beliefs, I fear he would hardly infer from the spectacle before him, that we considered the entire race of human beings our neighbors; much less that this idea of the fraternity of the race, was the leading thought in the Gospel system. But is not this spirit of intolerance, unfortunately so prevalent, the same in kind with that which put the innocent Saviour to death? What was his offence? What had he done to deserve death? Nothing. "He went about doing good," spoke to the multitudes of their duties to God and each other, condemned the heartlessness of the favored classes, and showed that the distinction between Jew and Gentile must be broken down. He held up to men the character of the Great God, and taught them that the kingdom of His son must consume and break in pieces all other kingdoms, and finally possess the hearts of all people. "Never man spake like this man," so full of love, so earnestly, so confidently of God and eternity, and with such a sweep of vision.

The mystery of the Gospel was revealed to him, and the peace of God he was ready to bestow on the believing soul. Faiths, theologies, creeds, he did not formally state: he came to reveal God in all His fulness and glory, to place before the world a higher type of character, and to open the way to the true life in God. On these foundations might men build. He constructed no catechisms, and yet what he taught was more than the most elaborate creed can express. And it is because the church has overlooked the life of the Gospel, and adhered to the letter of it; because Christianity has been regarded as an organism, rather than as the power of God unto salvation; because men have preached *about* Christ rather than preached *Christ*, that so little has been done through its agency. And because Christendom is largely tinctured with the same anti-Gospel ideas — looking for Christ in the things which are without; in pomp and show — we are not doing the good we ought. We have hardly yet outgrown the prejudices of the Jews. "Nothing good can come out of Nazareth," is still too much the feeling, if not the popular cry. People judge by labels upon packages of ideas, not by the value of the contents of the packages themselves. Too often what is condemned in another sect, would be approved if started in our own. The need of the world is not organizations, but ideas, principles, motives; and not so much these as a hearty desire to use them. We know better than we do. The Pharisees were a

very religious people, pious to the outside of all requirements in that particular; and yet we know they were severely rebuked by our Lord. Why? when all their forms were regularly gone through with, and the nicest points of ecclesiastical discipline strictly enforced? Evidently, because they did nothing *but* regard forms. They recited prayers; they did not pray them. They gave tithes, not their hearts, to God. They were, as Jesus charged upon them, very fair without, but very corrupt within. This is an extreme case; but the tendency is ever to the substitution of external means for internal life. Christ when he left the world gave the church the spirit of truth to be the stay and comfort of its members. The more that spirit is infused into the hearts of the professed disciples of Jesus, the nearer is his church to the true position. This is the essential thing; divine life in the soul, loyalty to the holy will of the Father, a sincere and cheerful interest in humanity in all its manifold forms. This is the kernel; all else by comparison is but the husk — the external formula which holds the internal fact.

The most insurmountable obstacle with which our religion has had always to contend, is precisely the one which we have already more than hinted at,—I mean the estrangement of religion from life. Nobody denies in these days that all men are brethren; theoretically, all sects, and all people, good and bad, acknowledge it; but practically it is denied, set aside, or trampled upon, the moment it

is found in the way of popular interests. One can hear any amount of talk about the brotherhood of man, and the power of kindness to redeem, even from the most abandoned in our cities; and yet these truths are seldom or never applied by them. To them, as to most persons, the Gospel is little better than a dead letter the moment it requires the exercise of self-denial, or perils personal popularity.

Where, I repeat, is the difficulty? It is here. The world believes in the *historical* Christ, yea, almost knows him; but it has as yet scarcely heard of, much less seen the *spiritual* Christ. We know well enough that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that he spent much time in Nazareth, that he was baptized in the Jordan, that he taught in the temple, and was crucified on Calvary; but to know these things about Christ, is not to know Christ. They are some of the external facts in the outward life of Jesus, to be sure; but it is not these that the soul needs. It needs to see and commune with the Son of God, who was especially made manifest to the world when Jesus of Nazareth died. The love of the Father revealed in the Son, the image of the invisible God, the highest illustration of filial trust and generous affection,—this is what the soul needs; this is what Jesus came to be. Thus to know him is to know Christ; to know the Christ that never dies, that is at the right hand of God, the true image of every consecrated soul. Christianity is comparatively powerless because it has

been torn away from all vital connection with human reason and natural life. We sometimes deceive ourselves by supposing that we should make greater progress as Christians if we had more outward helps. In some respects this may be true; but the great lack does not lie in this direction. The first thing needful is a disposition to use what helps we have. We are not worldly minded and spiritually lean because the Gospel does not clearly state what manner of persons we ought to be, and open the way to duty; it is rather because we lack the hearty will to use the means within our reach. It would, perhaps, rejoice us all to know that another Gospel had been given to the world. But do we need another Gospel? Do we not sadly neglect the four we already have? Travelling in the desert, how should I rejoice when almost famishing with thirst, to find a spring of water; but would the finding of the spring satisfy my thirst? Must I not drink thereof? A friend might each day bring provisions, suited to the needs of my body, to the door of my dwelling. Grateful should I be for his kindness; but have I nothing to do? Will his care for me satisfy my hunger and save me from physical death? So of spiritual things. God gives us the means: we must use them. Of the water of life we must drink; of the bread of life we must eat. Be not deceived. We do not so much need more knowledge, as an inclination to apply what we already possess. It is possible for us to lean upon outward revelations to the neglect

of our inward growth. What *am* I, not what *have* I, is the question.

In a story which has recently come under my notice, there is a hymn addressed to Jesus, which the hero of the tale tells us he wrote when he was twelve years of age. It breaks off abruptly, because, as he says, after he had prayed for the spirit of Jesus he thought to himself, suppose I should get the spirit of Jesus what shall I do with it? Now there are in the Christian world a great many people in just this situation. They pray somewhat fervently for the spirit of Jesus, all the while not thinking what they are going to do with it, should they be so fortunate as to get it; not indeed expecting to obtain it, nor feeling any special need of it; but praying for it as a matter of form in the use of such words as belong to the nomenclature of worship. Now suppose the spirit of Jesus should come suddenly upon us; suppose our prayers, according to the letter of them, should all be answered some Sabbath day, and the light of divine love and duty should flow bountifully in upon our souls. What would be the result? Would our hearts be cold and our lives formal as now? Or should we make religion more a matter of life, and thus start our drowsy energies into the quick service of duty? O that we might realize how great our opportunities are, and how numerous the benefits which Infinite Love has bestowed upon us. Help us, Father, by Thy Spirit, that we may not coldly admire, but lovingly embrace Thy truth. Help us

to walk in the way which by Thy Son Thou hast made plain to us, and to become Thy disciples in thought and life.

Intolerance and selfishness are, rightly considered, very great offences against both God and man. No one has any right to live for himself alone. It is wicked to try to do so, a perversion of the object for which he was created. "What is that to me?" is the motto of such a one. "I had to work hard and deny myself much comfort. I know that sin and poverty are in the world, but I did not create them, and am not responsible for their existence." Here you err. You are responsible for them, so far as you are able to remove them. "We are members one of another." Common interests and common duties. Hand to hand and heart to heart the world around. Suppose everybody should act upon this selfish principle, or rather suppose everybody should refuse to do anything because they took this position, what would be the condition of things? Society would soon cease to be a healthy, vigorous body, because each drop of blood in its many members would be isolated from every other. This intense devotion to self is, moreover, open to the charge of ingratitude; since it is impossible for any person to live within the compass of his own individuality. We *are* dependent upon other people; we *do* receive benefits from others. It seems as if Deity designed by the very helplessness of our infancy, by the nursing and care with-

out which not one of us could have reached childhood even, by our dependence upon external nature for food and shelter, and by the love for each other natural to all, — to point out to us our relationship, and encourage us to mutual sympathy and aid.

This branch of our subject is forcibly illustrated in our text. We read that the Priest who went from Jerusalem to Jericho, "passed by on the other side" of the way where the traveller had been left, and that the Levite merely "looked at" the wounded man. It does not appear that either of them touched the unfortunate person who had "fallen among thieves." It is certain, at least, that they did not do him any bodily harm. Most likely the Priest was on his way to Jericho to attend to his official duties. The presumption is that he had something to attend to in Jericho, and went on his way to perform it. Do we therefore excuse the Priest for passing by on the other side? Do we not feel, each one of us, that he neglected an important duty to him who had fallen among thieves? And do we not condemn him for the sins of omission of which by that neglect of duty he became guilty? Most certainly we do. Transfer the scene from Asia to America, and the principle is not changed. Those who have fallen by the way here look to us for aid, nor should they look in vain. We travel daily from Jerusalem to Jericho. Do we "pass by on the other side" of the claims of the poor, the cries of the oppressed, or the wounded and stript, of any clan or nation? How much

nobler it is to be a Good Samaritan, guilty neither by the commission of sin nor the omission of duty, than to be a selfish Priest who passes by suffering humanity; or a bigoted Levite who clearly sees the wrong but puts forth no exertion to remove it. Did you ever reflect, my hearers, how closely related we are to the natural world, and how indispensable the bountiful provisions of Providence are to our very being? How many lives have been sacrificed to sustain you since you were born? How many tiny insects and noble animals labor through days and years to add to your comfort and support? In our homes we have about us the representatives of nearly all nations, in the utensils and fabrics with which our houses are furnished. Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, are under contribution to our comfort, and almost every branch of industry adds something of skill or convenience for the better display of our personal powers. At your leisure think how many persons, animals, insects, fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea, labor, suffer, spin, weave, plan, construct, manufacture, build, die for you. Such meditations will be likely to excite grateful emotions toward God for the ample and suitable provisions which He has made for us, and deepen our sense of the wickedness of that exclusive regard for self, which exerts too great an influence over us all.

Such are some of the lessons taught us by our text. In the fear of God let us apply them to our

personal needs, that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Stand not in the way of our own peace. Use the means which God has placed within our reach. Said the rusty shield to the sun, "Illuminate me; but the sun replied to the rusty shield, Purify thyself!" While we pray to the Sun of Righteousness to illuminate our hearts, let us consider whether we have cleansed them from the defilements of sin! Take heed that you do not deceive yourselves. In the spirit of brotherly love, with duty, not self, as your aim, may you enjoy the peace of Jesus, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

LET US PRAY.

HOLY FATHER, by whose good pleasure we have been permitted to assemble here to-day, help us to be grateful for all Thy mercies. May we employ wisely the means which Thou hast provided for us, and live righteously and soberly in this present world. We beseech Thee, O God, incline our hearts to love Thee, and to obey Thy law. Have compassion on us in our weakness and forgive the wrongs which we have done. Grant us more perfectly to know and more diligently to follow the example of Thy Son, that we may be possessed of his spirit, and walk in the way of Thy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THE REIGN OF CHRIST.

BY REV. JOHN BOYDEN. SCRIPTURE LESSON, HEB. XI.

But now we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. — HEB. XI. 8, 9.

THESE words afford us instruction as to the ultimate issue of the divine purpose in Jesus Christ, and consolation for seasons of trial, to which we may well take heed "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." Let us attend to these two considerations.

I. It is affirmed in so many words, that Jesus tasted death for "every man." That the object of this was to bring "unto glory" all for whom he died, is clearly indicated by the spirit and scope of the text, and distinctly stated in the verse next succeeding. "For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." That we do not strain the apostle's language when we use the words "many sons" as equivalent to "every man,"

will appear if we consult the fifth chapter of his letter to the Romans, and especially where he says, "for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." And further, let it be impressed upon the mind, that whatever may have been the specific aim of the Redeemer in offering himself for mankind, his whole purpose originated in divine love for sinful man. The text assures us that, "*by the grace of God*," that is, the *favor* with which the Almighty regarded the human race, Jesus tasted death for every man.

We have, then, to begin with, clear and explicit evidence that the "better covenant," of which Jesus was the Mediator, originated in God's love for man. It is important to keep this fact in view, not only as essential to the symmetry of the divine plan, but also because multitudes glorify the Son at the expense of the Father; alleging that he was compassionate while the Father was wrathful, and received in his own bosom the shafts that were aimed at humanity! In this way, we are told, Jesus "changed the wrath to grace," opened a door of mercy, and made it possible for mankind to be saved! And is this all? Must we believe that He who is "very God," took human nature upon himself, died upon the cross, to appease the wrath which, *as God*, he cherished; and yet only made it *possible* that men might be saved? Surely, it does not become us, in the shadow of such a thought, to talk of a "hope which is an

anchor of the soul, sure, and steadfast." Mere *possibilities* afford no promise on which the soul can rest. The "joy unspeakable" which swelled the bosom of the apostle did not spring from the bare possibility of salvation, but from the "exceeding great and precious *promise*" of it. "For all the promises in Christ are yea," [i. e. *certain*,] "and in him amen," [i. e. fulfilled.]

Now, that the death of Christ was accepted by the apostles, not as the procuring cause of God's love for mankind, but as the first fruit of it, is as plainly declared as any fact in the word of God; and we marvel that any reader of the Bible doubts it. The author of our text says, "God commendeth *his love* toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "We love him because he first loved us." (1 John iv. 10, 19.) Is there any question as to the meaning of these passages? Does it seem possible to doubt that the entire scheme of redemption originated in the counsels of Infinite Love? Or, that God and Christ were one in spirit and purpose, by the cross and by the yielding sepulchre? Or, that the whole foundation of man's love to God is God's love to him? Here, then, is established the first principle of the gospel, viz., that God so loved the world, that He sent His Son, imbued with His own spirit, to accomplish

its redemption; and in furtherance of this sublime purpose, the Son tasted death "for every man."

See now the terms in which the result is indicated. The words of David are quoted and applied to Christ: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, *He left nothing that is not put under him.*" This language of necessity includes all God's moral subjects, "the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth," and they are all *subject*, in the purpose of God, to the government of His Son. That this implies on their part, obedience, reconciliation, likeness to God, seems evident from the fact, that, "*now*, we see not yet all things [absolutely] put under him;" but we have the guarantee that it shall be ultimately accomplished, in that Christ died for every man.

The hearer will observe that the language of the apostle is bold and vigorous. The style is peculiar to him. He sees the enemy, he knows how strongly he is fortified, how he has taken humanity captive at his will, and alienated a world from God; and yet he intimates neither parley nor compromise. The demand is an unconditional surrender; the result, universal obedience. "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies, [yes, *all* enemies,] under his feet;" but the last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. "And when all things shall be surrendered unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

(1 Cor. xv. 25, 26, 28.) In these scriptures, the subjection of all things to Christ, is the same as the subjection of Christ to the Father, — implying cheerful obedience and spiritual oneness; and this is what we mean by universal salvation. It is the fulfilment of God's ancient prophecy when He said, "Unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear, *surely* [not possibly] shall say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." (Isa. xlv. 23, 24.) But the divine method is, that they shall bow to Christ as God's appointed agent; for he is "the way, the truth, and the life," and has said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 9–11.)

I know full well, that what seems to us the obvious meaning of this class of scriptures, is rejected by the popular voice; but my conviction is not disturbed by the method adopted to avoid the conclusion to which we have come. In relation to the general idea of enemies being "put under his feet," it is said that Christ will *crush them by the heel of his power;* that they will be trampled in the dust. Sometimes it is affirmed that *some* are thus subdued, while others are brought into loving obedience, and made heirs of salvation.

In answer to this kind of objection, let us recall the fact already once stated, that the subjection of all things to Christ is announced in the same terms, as the subjection of Christ to the Father, when his mediatorial kingdom shall have been delivered up; and, surely, in his subjection he is to "sit on the right hand of the throne of God." Again, every Christian, objecting to this interpretation, if his own testimony is reliable, has once been an enemy. And how was he subdued? Was he crushed, or was he humbled and reconciled? Paul gives no intimation that there will be two kinds of subjection; he says nothing of two classes of enemies; but simply that *all enemies* shall be put under his feet. He plainly intimates that he has witnessed the subjugation of some, by saying, "We see not *yet* all things put under him." And that this style of language conveys the idea of ultimate Christ-like obedience on the part of the human race, is manifest from the tone of rejoicing which everywhere accompanies it. Paul associates with it the destruction of death and the devil, and completes his description of the grand consummation, by putting into the mouths of the redeemed, the song of triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Would they ask thus for the sting of death, if from the celestial courts they could see myriads bound in eternal chains, never to be broken? A military chieftain said there was but one thing sadder than a victory, and that was a defeat. And, truly, when we are told that hun-

dreds of thousands daily perish beyond the hope of recovery, though Christ died for them, it would seem as though heaven should be hung in sackcloth, and all the holy angels, with the few who shall be saved, engage in perpetual fasting! When we remember that Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all;" that he took part in flesh and blood, "that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" and when on these facts the light of prophecy shines, so that we read in distinct characters, "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and *shall be* SATISFIED," we see not the possibility of failure. But, if in this we are deceived, we should scarcely know which to choose, if choice were given us, a place among the many whose groans shall rend the air forever, or an inheritance among the few who must dwell in petrified selfishness, strangers to that flow of sympathy which is the source of richest blessings upon the earth.

But it cannot be. All that is godlike in man, pleads against it as the ruin of a world. All that is reverent in our nature, rebels against it as blasphemy. All the living sympathies which flowed from the bosom of the blessed Jesus, forbid it. All that divine love which is at once our pattern and supply, is pledged to write its law upon the common heart and deliver the creation "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished." The prayers of good men are laden with aspirations for it; the holiest affections, quivering with emotion in the

memory of some wayward child, cling to it as the only balm that avails anything, where human hands are impotent to save.

Proclaim it, then, as from mountain tops, that God has purposed, through Jesus Christ, to establish His kingdom of love and harmony in every heart; to make an end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness; and ultimately fill the world with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

> "His own soft hand shall wipe the tears
> From every weeping eye;
> And pains and groans, and griefs and fears,
> And death itself shall die."

Such is the sublime prospect which Christian faith opens to view; the end of all our sorrows, the answer of all our prayers.

II. But this result is yet a great way off. We dwell amidst the imperfections of a rudimental state. We linger among shadows often dark to our weak vision, and fearfully foreboding. Sin abounds. Crime walks forth with the tread of a giant still in his prime. "Man's inhumanity to man" marks every epoch of history. The oppressor is still girt with power to trample his equal in the dust. Mailed hosts are marshalled for the field of battle where might, not right, decides the question at issue. More secretly, but not less surely, sin in its milder forms is sapping the foundations of social life. Selfishness rushes along forbidden paths, locking "the lost wealth a thousand

want beside," stealing oft "the livery of heaven" to cover its vile purposes, yet shutting its bowels of compassion against the cry of the needy. Yet this is only one phase of human life. There is a brighter picture to be drawn; and the Christian philanthropist, who is no stranger to the divine light which shows us what we are and are to be, will not fail to detect, here and there, signs of recuperative energy in man, and harbingers of that Providence which will cause the wrath of man to praise God. He will know that, everywhere, the law of compensation is still in operation, and that "where sin abounds, grace will much more abound." Nay, more; he will trace gleams of light in the present darkness; and, simultaneously, with his observation of sinfulness, will he record the triumphs of goodness. He will realize that, on the whole, there is vastly more good than evil in the world; that the latter springs from derangement of the moral nature, while the former is its legitimate expression; and that, in the constitution of things, the one, originating in human frailty, is only "temporal," while the other, having its source in God, is "eternal."

But notwithstanding our reason, which looks from the beginning to the end, is satisfied "that all things shall work together for good;" notwithstanding we are shown "by proofs divine," that Jesus must reign and subdue all things unto himself, so that the last prodigal shall be brought home, and God be "all in all" to each and every soul, — yet

this may be only a conviction of the understanding. We may be content with it, as a logical and scriptural conclusion, and still hold it at arms-length. It may play round the head and come not near the heart. It may delight the intellect, but fail to interest the feelings; and surely man is not half convinced while the soul remains unmoved. It is for this reason that the personal life and presence of Jesus imparted such unction to the truths he taught. How much more did the disciples feel the force of his words when they heard them warm from the heart; when, not the lips alone, but every feature spoke, and the very attitude of his person seemed to command assent. They *saw* him, and his presence was a benediction. And now, after eighteen hundred years have passed, after science has laid her offerings at the foot of the cross and shown herself the witness and hand-maid of religion, we still need to see Jesus to give us a calmness and strength for the trials that await us. For, although we may "feel after God," and be assured he is near, we have no one who can "show us the Father," except him who is His "express image."

My brethren, we cannot have Christianity without Christ. This remark may seem wanting in force; but I am persuaded that multitudes hold the intellectualism of Christianity and are gratified with its promised results, without finding room, either in their creeds or hearts, for the living Jesus. To them he is dead. All his labors ended at the cross. Three years sufficed for *his* portion in the

work of salvation, and nothing more is expected at his hands. Now, what we need is, to know that that same spirit which moved the Son of God to lay down his life for the world, is now as truly with humanity in all its struggles, hopes, and fears, as when in the flesh Jesus "went about doing good." We must have a deep conviction that he is now a living presence, like the sainted Stephen when he kneeled in the face of death and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." We want faith in the Saviour that *is*, as well as faith in the Christ of history. And when this shall be our condition; when, instead of looking back always, where Jesus begun his work, or forward, where he will consummate it; we shall look around us, upon the monuments of his grace, and within, for the temple of his abode, — (John xiv. 22, 23.) then shall we have "a very present help in trouble." Then shall we come to know him, who, according to Paul, is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever;" and then shall we experience the truth of what Jesus said, (John xi. 26.) "*Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*"

As Jesus bore all our infirmities, yet triumphed over them, he is able to *help us* in all. No burdens will be laid upon us, except as strength to bear them will be given, if we ask it. We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. We can walk the billows of misfortune, when through the mist we see the form, and above the roar we hear the voice of God's beloved, saying,

"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." If, down deep in our souls, the faith of Christ is accepted as a living reality, so that we are grounded and settled in him, then, no tempest can be so furious as to separate us from his love or drive from us the conviction that he will be with us always, unto the end. The light of history and the light of prophecy meet and mingle where we are; Jesus the sympathetic and Jesus the triumphant, blend in our present experience, or else the genuineness of our Christianity is doubtful. And, looking beyond ourselves where the elements are in commotion, and the "waters cast up mire and dirt," though we see not yet all things put under Christ, yet, from our own acquaintance with him, our experience of his sweet control over discordant passions, we shall know that his reign must be universal; for he "tasted death for every man."

O, brethren, in your conscious weakness and oft-recurring needs, "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It may be dark around you, because it is dark within. Perhaps that "life," which "is the light of men," has somewhat faded from the memory and the heart. Perhaps it is with the spiritual eye as with the natural, that darkness delays our seeing, even after the light has come; and the light seems to blind us. But if we look steadily and patiently, the pupil will adjust itself, and the object will be imaged upon the heart again. Do you mourn the misspent hours, the sins of omission and commis-

sion which mark the history of your past lives? Jesus hath more compassion for you than you have for yourselves; his plea is written upon the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and God will hear, "for he knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust."

Do any sigh over the waywardness of some cherished friend, — some child, or brother, or parent? Have prayers and tears and sacrifices been unavailing? Look away to Calvary where the Son of God tasted the bitter cup, and read the pledge which covers all your sorrow. Is there a vacant chair in your home-circle, which in its mute eloquence pleads with memory that the departed shall not be forgotten? Do you oft listen for footsteps which, alas, you hear no more, and look for those loving eyes which "answer not again" to your glance of affection? Be entreated to welcome that measure of faith which beholds the blessed Jesus making up his jewels, gathering every hour the trophies of his grace, reclasping broken chains, and cementing human hearts in everlasting union by that love which alone shall subdue all things. In a word, whatever may be our temporary lot, be it your purpose and mine, meekly to accept it as a gracious discipline, and fervently to hope that Jesus will reign till there shall be "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and one family in all the dominion of God.

LET US PRAY.

Our Father, we bless Thee for the privileges of this day; for the gift of Thy dear Son, whom Thou hast appointed heir of all things; and for the peace which comes to us through the promise of his ultimate reign. O, help us to grow in that spirit which pervaded his being and shone in his life, and grant us an inheritance among them which are sanctified. Pardon, we beseech Thee, our many offences, and deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. AMEN.

EXCUSES FOR NOT PROFESSING CHRIST.

BY REV. R. A. BALLOU. SCRIPTURE LESSON, MATT. X. 16–39.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. — MATT. X. 32.

WHILE Jesus was yet on the earth there were some, who, like Nicodemus the Jewish ruler that came to him by night, desired to enjoy the benefit of his teaching, without the responsibility of confessing him before the world and publicly acknowledging a belief in his truth. This was cowardly and selfish. It was not honest, straight forward, and manly, and he would not own such disciples. If he was the Messiah and was deserving any support, as such, he was deserving the fullest and heartiest support; and this, in vindication of his own character, he justly demanded. "He that is not for me is against me. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. If any man would be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." This is just what sincerity and honesty always require, and the consciences of all people must approve of it.

Yet, now, as at that early day, there are found numerous excuses for evading such a course. While most people are ready enough to be benefitted by Christianity, so far as they can be without making any sacrifice or assuming any responsibility in regard to it, and cherish a sort of half-realized hope that they shall in some way be caught up and saved by it, there are very few compared to the whole number who publicly confess Christ as their Master, and openly commit themselves to his doctrine and precepts.

Why is this so? If people believe in Christianity and are leaning upon it and trusting to it for their salvation, what good reason is there why they should not openly profess their belief, and fully commit themselves to it as sincerity and honesty require?

It is probable we have, many of us, fallen into error in regard to this matter. Not being quite willing to be committed to so high a standard, we have endeavored to convince ourselves that it is not necessary, not a duty. There are good people who do not make a profession of religion, and we prefer to be classed with them. It is of more importance to practice religion than it is to profess it. Thus we provide ourselves with numerous excuses for neglecting this duty; but these excuses are born of our inclinations, not of our sense of right; and it is probable very few of them would bear a thorough and candid investigation.

There is but little doubt that if people would disabuse their minds of all prejudice and all opinions arising merely from their inclinations instead of their sense of duty, and look simply at the merits of the subject, they would generally perceive that it is the duty of one who believes in Christ to openly acknowledge that belief, and be fully committed to the support and practice of his religion.

Your attention is now invited to a candid consideration of this subject. And it is only asked that you do not fortify yourselves against what may be said, and make up your minds beforehand that you will not be convinced. Be honest with yourselves and with the subject. Hold your minds open to receive the truth, whatever it may be; and, like earnest persons dealing with sacred things, resolve that, if what you hear said is in your unbiased judgment true, you will receive it and act accordingly. This is the way, and the only way, in which we can deal honestly with the truth.

The subject naturally resolves itself into two divisions.

First. The Excuses people offer for not confessing Christ by uniting with his Church and sitting at his Communion.

Second. The Reasons why they should do it.

Our present discussion will be limited to the first, the Excuses people offer for not confessing

Christ by uniting with his Church and sitting at his Communion.

These excuses, I have said, spring for the most part from our inclinations rather than from a sense of duty. It is one of those cases in which the wish is father of the thought. This fact alone should lead us to suspect that the excuses are not valid; for our inclinations are so often wrong that they are no safe guide without the assent and approbation of conscience.

It is but just, however, to state that some are *inclined* to perform this duty who do not, being prevented by various reasons; chiefly I think, by erroneous views of church ordinances. Baptism and the Communion are by them regarded as not only sacred, but sacred in such a way as to make them awful and repulsive, rather than inviting. But this view of them is altogether erroneous. It is true they are solemn rites, but they are not awful in any sense that should make them seem forbidding. If we are but sincere and in earnest, we should have no more fear in approaching them than we should have in approaching the marriage altar, or in performing any other sacred and important duty. There is nothing about them that need awaken any superstitious dread in our minds. They are but aids and helps to us; an acknowledgment of our religious faith; memorials of a Saviour's love for us; symbols of our desire to live a good life from Christian motives. If we have such a desire, we need not hesitate to par-

ticipate in these rites any more than we need hesitate to express our regard for a friend, if it is sincere and true. In the days of the Apostles, the whole congregation sat at the communion table. No one had then thought of this rite with feelings of dread and fear. It was regarded by the early Christians as a pleasant and appropriate means of expressing their faith in Christ, and their desire to abide by his teaching.

But probably a much greater number of persons neglect to come to the Communion for other reasons. Not a few offer the very common excuse of *humility* — they are not good enough. If a person makes this excuse in real sincerity and with regret, he will not have to make it long. He is probably much nearer the kingdom than he thinks he is. But if he makes it merely for the sake of an excuse, it is evident he does not wish to be good enough. Perhaps it is true that he is not good enough; but whose fault is it if he is not? Who stands in the way of his becoming good enough, if he is disposed to? How long will he make this excuse? If a person is aware that he is not good enough to be classed among Christian people, what should he do but set himself about a reformation? The way is plain and open before him. He has no right to remain bad, and no excuse for it if he does. He wrongs himself, wrongs society, and wrongs his God. If a person thinks he is morally unfit to sit at the communion,

he should not and need not remain so even a week; and no one can give a single valid reason for having this excuse to offer a second time. How good must a person be in order to be fit to commune at the Lord's table? He must have a sincere desire and firm purpose to become good enough as soon as possible. Such a desire and purpose make him at once an acceptable disciple. If a person have not at least the desire and purpose to do right, it is so obvious he should have, and might have them, that the case needs no argument. When, therefore, a person gives as an excuse for not coming to the Communion, that he is not good enough, the reply to be made to him is, that the way is open, and it is his privilege and duty to become good enough as speedily as possible. This excuse will not serve him a second time. Even if he lack opportunity to observe the rite with fellow believers, the disposition to do so, and the qualifications therefor, remain none the less a duty.

Then there are others who have what may be called the excuse of *insincerity*. One may be a very good Christian they say without professing religion. It is better to practice religion than to profess it. This is very true, but it does not appear to be a sufficient reason for not openly professing the principles by which one intends to live. And I doubt if it is made by persons who think they can be any better, or intend to be any better out of the church than they would be in it. Persons who are

earnestly endeavoring to attain to the highest standard of Christian excellence, do not present this excuse. It comes rather from those who have not yet resolved on such a course; and, probably, because they are not quite ready to commit themselves to the highest standard of duty. If a person has not fully made up his mind to do right under all circumstances, he will take care not to place himself in a position to be judged by a perfect standard. If the motive were probed to the bottom, it would probably be found that the people who refuse to unite with the church on the ground that it is better to practice religion than to profess it, do not do so because they really design and propose to live according to the highest standard of Christian duty without professing to; but, rather, because they wish to shirk the obligation and responsibility of such a standard. If any member of the Continental Congress had refused to sign the Declaration of Independence, on the ground that it was better to practice the principles it embodies than to profess them, he would have been justly suspected of desiring to shirk the responsibility of being committed to them, and of wishing to hold in reserve a chance to deny them in case he was hard pressed. A person whose mind is fully made up to abide by his principles in all cases, and who does not wish to reserve any chance to equivocate, is just as willing to profess his principles as he is to practice them, and if he is sincere and in earnest, he naturally seeks opportunities to do both.

If you present a man a temperance pledge, and he objects to signing it, saying at the same time that he is a temperance man, that he likes the temperance principles, and thinks it a good thing to practice total abstinence; but that he prefers to do it without a pledge, that he does not like to see a man sign away his liberty, — you may be sure he thinks it very likely he may have some use for the liberty he holds in reserve. So, if one refuses to make a profession of Christian faith and practice, giving as a reason, that he can be just as good a Christian without, it is probable he intends to be a pretty good Christian *in some respects*, but that he has not made up his mind to be a "straight out" Christian; if he had, he would not care in how many ways he was committed to Christianity; the more the better. Nicodemus undoubtedly thought Christianity a very good religion, and meant to get some benefit from it in a cowardly way; but what if all those who first believed in Christ had been like Nicodemus? where would Christianity have been now? See the difference between him and Saint Paul. Nicodemus was one who thought he would be a Christian without professing his faith. He was consequently a cipher in the Christian world. Saint Paul was a Christian in whom faith was conviction, and conviction a purpose; and he was neither afraid nor ashamed to own his principles; nor did he wish to reserve to himself a chance to ignore their obligation when it might be convenient; and the result is, a light from his life shining

brighter and brighter through the darkness and the changing scenes of eighteen hundred years. If a man desires to be a useful Christian, he will commit himself to the principles by which he lives, and show that they are worthy to be, not only practised, but maintained and defended openly in the face of all the world.

Again; there is what we may call the excuse of *opinion.* There are some in nearly all liberal societies who do not make a profession of religion, for the reason that they have convinced themselves that it is not a duty; and believe the custom might be dispensed with along with the doctrines that we reject in differing from the older sects. But it is probable that this belief is based on a sort of general prejudice against whatever has been associated with the errors and exclusiveness of so called Orthodoxy, rather than upon any deliberate and careful investigation of the merits of this particular subject.

We should not forget that our societies have been built up, in part, on opposition to the older sects. Not being able to believe in their doctrines, or sympathize with their spirit, those doctrines could but excite in us dislike and opposition; and there is danger of our resting satisfied with rejecting and opposing their views and methods, without cordially and adequately embracing religion under our own system. But if we undertake to live on mere opposition to other sects, we shall have a very poor living indeed; spiritually, we should starve to death. To reject the errors we find in religion or associat-

ed with it, is very commendable; but there could be no greater folly than to do this in the spirit of mere prejudice, and carry our opposition so far as to reject religion itself. If a person goes no farther than to reject the Orthodox faith, it does not follow as a matter of course that he is a Universalist, or Unitarian. When he has done this and nothing more, he is neither one thing nor another, as it respects religion; and he has no right to call himself a Universalist till he cordially embraces religion, and adopts, not only its doctrines, but its principles and its spirit under this system of faith. Christianity is a positive religion, and requires positive duties, and quite as much under our liberal interpretation of it, as under any other. A person may come into our societies to get rid of the errors and exclusiveness of the older sects, but not to get rid of the duties and obligations of religion. These are older than the errors, or the name of any sect; and we cannot dispense with them because they have been bound up with doctrines and associated with names that we reject.

When we think, if any of us ever do, of dispensing with the Communion, Baptism, and other church ordinances, along with some of the doctrines in the Athanasian creed, we should remember that these rites did not originate with the people we call Orthodox, nor are they to be classed with their errors. They were practised by Christ and his Apostles before Orthodoxy had a name, and are just as obligatory upon us as

though they had never been associated with error. Our business as Christian reformers is not to reject the old systems, indiscriminately, but to sift and purify them. All that was ever good and true in religion is good and true now. Our inquiries should lead us to ascertain the truth that Christ and his Apostles revealed, and the ordinances which they established, in distinction from what has been added by the creed-makers; and when we have done this, we have done all that we can do except to adopt them in full, and cherish them with our whole hearts, as the basis of our faith and practice.

Yes, my brethren, if any of you conclude that it is not a duty to confess Christ before men; to openly acknowledge him as your Saviour, and fully commit yourselves to live in the faith and practice of his religion, you have to justify your course, if you can, not in any argument with Christians of other denominations, but with Christ and his Apostles. Their words and the record of their acts are before you in the New Testament. You must defend your position against what they taught and what they did, or admit that you are in error. And when you come to view the matter according to its real merits, according to the Bible and the practice of the earliest and best Christians, you will probably find there is but one way in which to decide it. You may be very good people without confessing Christ and avowing your allegiance to him before men. You may

be much better that many who do; but all this will not absolve you from the obligation to obey his command and honor his cause by so doing. If you would be Christians in the best sense; if you would be like James, John, and Paul, the faithful disciples and true friends of Christ; you will, like them, neglect no opportunity to honor him, or prove yourselves the open, earnest, unreserved advocates of his religion. As you would espouse the cause of any other friend whom you highly prize, and seek in all suitable ways to manifest your regard and prove your fidelity, so will you espouse his cause, not with reserve, in a sort of non-committal way; but fully, earnestly, decidedly; with such decision and energy of purpose, as will control and animate yourselves, and exert a vital influence upon others. You will not be content to be merely nominal Christians; you will take care that your service means something, and amounts to something which you can recognize yourselves as the fruits of your religion, and which can be seen as such by others.

The plea that you are not good enough to be Christ's disciples in this thorough sense, avails nothing; for if you are not, it is your privilege and your duty to become good enough.

The excuse that you can practise the principles and observe the precepts of his religion without professing to be his disciples, is not valid; for if you really mean to live by his religion, you will

be honorable enough to give him credit before the world for the principles by which your lives are governed. Besides; you can hardly find yourselves cherishing a sincere purpose to practise *all* the principles of Christianity, without being willing to commit yourselves to those principles.

And to assume that it is not a duty so to do, is to put your opinions above the teachings of Christ and the practice of his earliest followers.

It does not appear that any of these considerations are sufficient to justify those who believe in Christ in standing aloof from the ordinances of his religion. The way to be a Christian is to be one with our whole might, mind, and strength; reserving nothing, withholding nothing; keeping back from no service that will add to our usefulness, or prove our fidelity to the cause. We would do this in regard to any other good cause, and we certainly cannot think that religion requires of us any less earnestness or fidelity.

LET US PRAY.

Our Father who art in heaven, we devoutly thank Thee for all Thy goodness unto us, and especially for the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. May we be willing to confess him as our Saviour, and ready to commit ourselves to the obligations of his religion. Wilt Thou give us the spirit of Christian firmness and self-denial, that we may fearlessly and earnestly engage in his

service, and be faithful to all his requirements. Help us, in his name, to consecrate ourselves wholly to Thee, feeling it a privilege to perform any duty that may be required of us. Aid us and assist us thus through life, and finally take us unto Thyself, to serve Thee and praise Thee forever. AMEN.

THE ACCESS BY FAITH.

BY REV. G. H. EMERSON. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ROM. V.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. — ROMANS v. 1, 2.

THESE words present the whole subject of the Christian life, and this too in the true order of its constituent parts. First, we have presented *faith;* next in order, *justification;* and in the last place, *peace.* As a consequence of faith, we attain justification; and as a consequence of justification, we have peace with God.

The subject of *justification by faith*, enters very largely into theological discussion and inquiry. It is the prolific theme of sermons, essays, and even of books. It is a subject which many think hard to be understood. And not a few imagine they find in it the statement of a false and repugnant principle. With nearly all, the subject is presumed to need much explanation and defence.

People ask, Is it any merit in a man to have faith? Faith, it is assumed, is simply the assent of the mind to a doctrine — an assent determined,

forced, it may be, by evidence. Certainly there can be no merit in this. And if no merit exists in the case, how can faith be a ground of justification? Paul speaks of men who held the truth in unrighteousness. Such had of course the true faith, though they were wicked men. And are such men justified? justified merely because they believe the truth? merely because they have faith?

It appears to me that all the difficulty which the subject of justification by faith suggests, arises from inattention to the words in which the subject is presented. "Therefore being justified *by* faith, we have peace with God." These words certainly do not say that the mere act of faith or belief is a merit. It is not the having of *faith* that is meritorious, but the having of something else which we get *by* faith. Man is justified *by* faith, not *in* faith. Faith does something for him. It is a working principle. It is a power. When a genuine Christian faith gains a lodgment in the human soul, it begins to work upon that soul. It is like leaven in meal. It is like a coal of fire put into contact with an inflammable substance. Faith is not a passive thing. It is a force; and when it gets possession of a soul it begins to do something with it. It transfuses, permeates, agitates it. It sets man's spiritual faculties to work. It creates within him, in his passions, desires, motives, a fermentation, if we may so speak, by which his spiritual nature becomes clarified, and the evil that was in him is worked off. If a man merely *has*

faith — has it as polar ice has heat in a latent state — he is in no way the better, and neither is, nor deserves to be justified. But when, besides having it, he is worked upon by it, justification is the necessary result; and he that is justified has peace with God.

Put a literal interpretation on the words of the text, and no difficulty can possibly start up in the mind. These words do not, by any fair construction, represent faith as an end, but only as a means — a means *by which* justification is obtained. Justification is the fruit; faith is the branch on which it grows. Faith in itself alone is worthless; but in what it produces, in the fruit of justification and peace with God, it is above all price — the most precious inheritance which the soul of man can receive and appropriate.

The second verse of the text presents the matter in perhaps a clearer light. "By whom also [Christ] we *have access by faith* into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Faith is neither more nor less than AN ACCESS — an avenue through which the soul goes to God, attains justification and hope, and finds its highest peace. It is unhappily true, that many people who get possession of this avenue, make little or no use of it — do not go to God through it, and thence to justification and peace. But the avenue is not to be blamed for this neglect. The fault rests wholly with those, who, while they have the means of grace, do not care to use them.

The matter of justification by faith, will be intelligible enough if we will discipline our minds to look upon faith as an *access* to grace, not as grace itself; as a power *by which* we may be justified, and not as being in itself alone the ground of justification; as an active instrumentality bringing the soul into a condition of peace with God, and not as being a merit of itself, entitling the soul to this peace.

But how is faith an access to grace? How does it become a means of justification, and through this of peace with God? In what sense is it a power? These questions have an answer in the general statement, that faith and works stand related as *cause and effect;* and faith is a means of justification, is a power unto holiness, in the fact that it causes good works; in the fact, that through its influence man is led to righteousness, and to that peace with God which comes from righteousness.

The unfolding of this general statement, leads us to three fundamental facts as pertaining to man's growth in the Christian life; to which facts we now successively invite attention.

The first fact is, that, according to Christianity, *the essence of all excellence is a holy emotion in the heart of man.* External and visible deeds of charity have no Christian character except as they are the expression and result of the feeling of charity actuating the heart. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my

body to be burned, and have not charity" — have not that inward feeling, that holy state of heart, of which the giving of my goods to the poor is the natural manifestation, "it profiteth me nothing," and the act has no Christian character.

This fact, though a familiar one, is of very great importance. Out of the heart are the issues of life. The heart is the fountain, and unless the waters here are sweet, it matters not what the stream may be. True, in most cases the stream will be as the fountain. Sometimes, however, means are employed to change the character of the stream, without regard to the source whence it flows. It is not unfrequently the case that water, which is really impure at the fountain, by means of a filtering process in the stream, is made fit for use, and even pleasant to the taste. In most cases, an evil life will flow out of an evil heart. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that various considerations of prudence, desire of esteem, a wish to stand well in the estimation of other men, and other selfish motives, operate as a sort of filter by which the visible conduct, though flowing from an impure fountain, attains a sort of circumspection, and is in point of fact serviceable to humanity. But we have sadly misapprehended the essential fact of Christianity, if we suppose that any degree or quality of outward circumspection, attained through any such filtering method, is entitled to the name of *Christian* morality. Far, very far indeed from this, is the real truth. If it were possi-

ble for a man to exhibit in his outward life every grace and deed which the purest heart could suggest or desire, his life, for all this, would not be a Christian life, unless his excellence of deportment proceeded from a *holy emotion filling his soul.*

The necessity, then, of holy feeling in the heart, as the cause, the essence, and the character of the Christian life, is the first fact which an attempt to explain the operation of faith, requires that we vividly apprehend.

We come now to the second fundamental fact,— which is, that *man of himself alone is not able to obtain this holy feeling.* On this point, words are unavoidably ambiguous, and my meaning may be misapprehended. Let me then explain. I do not mean to say, that man, as he is now circumstanced in this Christian world, is not able to secure in his heart that divine feeling, whence proceed the desire and attainment of the Christian life. My meaning is, that man of *himself alone,* — without regard to any of the opportunities, influences, and aids which are around him,— has not this important, this indispensable power. He has, indeed, a divine nature — a nature that is adapted to the Christian life — that is susceptible to the deep feeling out of which this life must spring. But here is the important distinction. The capability of man's spiritual nature is a susceptibility rather than a power. As regards the susceptibility of his soul, he is strong indeed — is created but little lower than the

angels, and fitted for glory and honor; as regards his nature, considered as a power, he is indeed weak, is helpless, and must have aid.

The truth here stated, finds a clear illustration in the capabilities and the dependencies of our temporal nature. It would perhaps be deemed an unwarrantable statement, that an intelligent, healthy, athletic man is not able to procure the sustenance which his bodily wants demand. It depends upon the way we understand it, whether the statement be true or false. Placed upon a rich and productive soil, with the means of tillage at his command, and secure of the genial and quickening influence of sun and shower, — so circumstanced, with such an outfit, it is true that the strong man has the power to provide for his bodily and temporal needs. Place the same man upon a desert island of the ocean, on which no rain from heaven ever falls, out of whose sands not so much as a blade of grass ever springs, — place him there, with nothing but himself, his intelligence, his health, his athletic frame; and how soon would the awful truth flash upon his soul, *that of himself alone he is weak and helpless* — unable indeed to allay a single pang of hunger, or quiet a single craving of thirst. Of himself alone, he must perish. Something must be done for him. Something must be brought to him. His cry is for help — *help from a source other than himself!*

The human soul left to itself, dependent on its capabilities — which like the hunger of the body,

are susceptibilities rather than powers — is like the wretched exile on that desert waste. Its first need is the holy emotion which shall flood its faculties, and thus quicken them into life, and develop them into powers. Of this emotion it is susceptible, and only susceptible. It is wanting in the power that shall evolve this susceptibility into a fervor, into an energy, into a divine emotion. Something must be done for it. Something must be brought to it. Some other hand than its own must be reached forth, and give support. Its cry is for help — *help from a source other than itself!*

We find, then, in the soul of man a great want, and also an inability to supply that want. The first fact, involving the very essence and character of the Christian life, is the necessity of a holy emotion as the root and source of Christian character; the second fact is the souls inability to create this emotion, for which its highest capability is but a susceptibility — a susceptibility to be acted upon by an agency from without him — a susceptibility needing and waiting for help from a Source greater than man.

The third fact brings before us the method by which faith operates unto justification and peace with God. *Faith is* THE ACCESS *to this divine and all-sufficient Source of help!* In its highest character, Christian faith is purely and solely an access to the grace of our heavenly Father, standing wherein we may rejoice in hope

of the glory of God. It is the medium of communication between God and the human heart, whereby the love of God is shed abroad within us, and His holy spirit is given unto us. Look then upon faith in this light—as the instrumentality by which something is brought into the soul, which something the soul, in the exercise of its own faculties alone, cannot reach, cannot secure. In the vision of Jacob, a ladder was set up connecting the place where he slept with heaven, on which the angels of God ascended and descended. Faith is the ladder which connects the needy soul with God, the Source of grace, and the support and encouragement of every holy purpose and every heavenly aspiration; and on this ladder the needs of the soul find an easy ascent to the throne of mercy; and, by the same appointed way, the love of God and the answer of peace find ready access to the supplicating spirit.

Who does not need this "access by faith?" Who but that feels his need of that arm of succor, by whose aid alone the helplessness of the spirit becomes strength? In the day of trouble, in the hour of despair, in the loneliness of grief and sorrow, we need a Helper—a Helper whose mercy shall encourage us to penitence for every sin, whose presence shall be a light in our otherwise dark and gloomy souls, and in whose grace we may rejoice and be at peace. To this divine Source, faith is our access. As such may we search for it as for a hidden treasure; and strength-

ened by the might it imparts, filled by the holy emotions it starts into power, encouraged by the hope it nurtures, and rejoicing in that love of God which it is the means of shedding abroad in our hearts, may we persevere unto that entire justification from sin, of which this faith is the sufficient pledge, and unto that peace with God which is its crowning glory and man's highest bliss.

LET US PRAY.

ALMIGHTY GOD: Suffer our approach unto Thee, once more, ere we separate to our homes. Accept our gratitude for the privileges of this hour of worship. Beget through Thy grace that Faith within us, which shall bring us justification with Thee. Make the light and love of Heaven, the life and joy of our hearts. Convict us of sin; show us our weakness; make bare to us Thine arm of power; be Thou our strength. Defend us in dangers; comfort us in trials and sorrows; save us in life and in death. And to Thy great name be ascriptions of praise, world without end. AMEN.

CHRIST APPROPRIATED.

BY REV. R. TOMLINSON. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JOHN VI. 30—71.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.—JOHN VI. 56.

If any would understand the intimate relation of Christ and his followers, they should study carefully the Scriptures appertaining to that endearing union. The most significant forms of expression are employed to set it forth, which, being comprehended, communicate a knowledge as nearly perfect, as any which can be obtained.

The greatest difficulty in this search, is to become familiar with the original definition of the terms employed — to put ourselves back amid the times and language of the Saviour, and draw from surrounding scenes their import and application. Though much of our own intercourse is carried on by the use of signs and figures of speech, they are altogether different from those of the ancients, yea from any in other portions of the world. Each has peculiarities of its own in this respect, which must be known, ere the conversation can edify or direct the soul. That which is first essential, therefore, in coming to the sacred testimony, is to form an

acquaintance with the words of utterance, then to appreciate them according to original design. Thus will the light be distinct and clear, fashioning the spirit after the impressions of its own radiance, and preparing it to bring forth fruit in honor of him who gave it, and for the elevation and profit of those connected.

If these intimations and cautions are observed in the discussion pending, we shall be interested in the attainments made, and have occasion for much mutual joy.

By many declarations, Christ affirmed his alliance and authority, and taught the necessity of believing in him. "I am that bread of life. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The inquiry of his enemies was, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus answered; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." One but partially acquainted with the purport of this instruction, can perceive that it has no ordinary meaning. It is marked and forcible. When flesh and blood are talked of as meat and drink, and as containing the elements of life, it is worthy of earnest and deliber-

ate thought. With this judgment we come to a specific examination of the selection made.

I. What was intended by these peculiar expressions? And what possible connection could their ordinary acceptation have, with any idea of a spiritual mission which could legitimately be entertained? Evidently this would be meaningless; hence, they are to be regarded as figurative, indicating some important appropriation in behalf of those concerned.

Christ came into the world to instruct and "to save sinners," — to reveal the kingdom of God to its erring subjects, and teach them its principles and spirit, that they might by application enjoy their fruition. His fidelity in this celestial work, awakened the hatred of his Jewish brethren in power, and involved him in difficulties from which, in the providence of God, he did not extricate himself, and was not delivered. The troubles to which he was subjected, increased more and more, until they brought him to the bar of Pilate, where, by the clamor of the excited multitude, he was condemned to die by crucifixion, and whence he was conducted to the place assigned for the execution of the cruel mandate. There his body was broken, the flesh suffered. There his blood flowed out through the wound and the rent made.

Invested, then, in this cause of human redemption were the actual flesh and blood of the Lord. He gave them both in confirmation of his love.

He, therefore, who by faith partakes of his teachings and their benefits, virtually appropriates to himself that which they cost.

The children who eat of the bread acquired by the sweat and toil of a father, may be said to live on him. They eat, and drink the substance of himself expended in the procurement of the food consumed; not the identical particles, but that for which they were freely given in exchange.

He who by *dissipation* spends an inheritance bequeathed to him, is justly described as having eaten and drunken it, or consumed it upon his lusts. And yet no one would suppose from it, that he made his meals of the veritable gold and silver left him, but of those things for which he gave them. So when we read of eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of God, no one should suppose that literally they are eaten and drunken, but that which was secured by them is participated. This was the significance of his language, as interpreted by himself. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Of itself "the flesh profiteth nothing."

Embraced in this idea, are not only the words which our Master spake, but all the means of grace which he instituted as essential to the elevation and sanctification of a degraded and sin-enthralled humanity. Everything for which he gave himself is included. He that eateth of any or all of these, as the avails of his flesh and blood, "dwelleth in him, and he in him."

II. The method of appropriation herein intimated is worthy of distinct consideration. Eating is something more than outward application in the natural processes of continuing physical life, and so it is in the use of the gifts of our Lord. Outward blessings flow from them to all who dwell within their atmosphere — general order, educational advantages, moral appeals of various kinds, security of person and property — all these are incidental, appendages they may be called; but they are sufficient to awaken gratitude and praise. The body and blood of our Lord become distinct though imperceptible parts of such only as practically interpret the thought of feeding upon them. As natural bread, by the organs of the body, when given to them, becomes a part of its own substance in the forms of flesh, bones, sinews, blood and other necessary fluids, so the doctrine and testimony of Christ, when accepted and digested by the soul, is a part of it. It mingles and commingles and blends in proportions, each answering to its kind, and all to the great Spirit by which every effort and application are sanctified.

There must needs be a union, a marriage of the soul and these heavenly bounties, or rather an absorbing or taking up of the latter by the former, so that they are made one and indivisible. Only such are fully benefitted by the teachings of our Lord. They alone are conscious of growth, and an increase of moral and spiritual power, and of a pre-

paration for the highest duties and felicities heaven on earth can give.

We see in this the difference between dwelling in the shadows of the gospel, and having its glorious radiance an inspiration within us; between tarrying in the outer court of its vast temple of beauty, and enjoying a participation of all its feasts and fatness. The one is but little more than material vision, the other is the bliss of inward experience. That is historic acquaintance; this, positive and conscious knowledge. It is hence demanded of all who would be "blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus;" of all who would make him their "sanctification, and wisdom, and redemption;" of all who would rightly educate others in the science of Godliness; of all who would leave traces behind them for the encouragement and strength of succeeding pilgrims.

III. Consider the doctrine and teachings which were represented by the terms Flesh and Blood in our text. These are not presented in any particular and distinct forms; nevertheless they are easily classified, and in that way admit of a more perfect recognition than in any other.

Though fruitful, and rapid in the utterance of thought, our divine Teacher never confused himself or his hearers, by combinations unnatural and irrelevant. They were poured forth in pleasing and harmonious succession, or in connections legitimately their own, and always adapted to the end

designed. Hence, to distinguish and arrange them in their appropriate order, is not beyond the province of any having an understanding of them. Beholding them as a whole, they arrange themselves in the mind almost without our effort. It perceives what must be the great leading ideas in a system of instruction having such purposes and objects, and takes them one after another in their respective places, and they become an aggregate of harmonious items, attractive to the vision, and practically essential to the well-being of its subjects.

They take to themselves, also, appropriate names, being indicated by the peculiar character and office which they must necessarily bear. Such intimations inspire us to look for some precision and definiteness of statement; though no arbitrary numbering of them appears.

1. Therefore, God is recognized as the Fountain or Source of all spiritual wisdom and efficiency — the origin of all the impressive lessons which were ever uttered for human acceptance by faith. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that Himself doeth; and He will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. I have not spoken of my-

self, but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatever I speak, therefore, even as the Father gave me commandment so I speak. This is the work of God; that ye believe on him whom He hath sent." In other Scriptures he is called "the Lamb of God — the Chosen of the Father, full of grace and truth — the Image of the invisible God — the Brightness of the Father's glory — God manifest in the flesh."

All these declarations present one and the same idea. It is that God is the Author of the gospel, that the commandments of the Scriptures came from Him, and that by reading them we are brought into intimate communion with His wisdom. He speaks to us there with an authority which must be observed, if we would succeed in the works which we undertake. Because He is not made a living verity among men, they many times spend their "money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not."

Not less are we taught of the Spirit and character of our Father. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

The same significant testimony is borne by the apostles. They continually speak of the "love of God in Christ Jesus." Said one of them, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

These representations of the divine Being are guides to our faith, and an interpretation of general and particular portions of Scripture. In all we must preserve entire their Spirit, knowing that, here as elsewhere, "love is the fulfilling of the law." Thus in the moral government of the world we have a God, the primal element of whose nature is *perfect goodness.*

2. Because a harmony between Him and those He determines to govern is desirable, all are called to repentance. "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the annunciation of the Saviour to the world. And his apostle in repetition said, "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." How natural an emanation is this, from the other great idea? "Ye must be born again," was Christ's word to the Jewish ruler. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." Recognitions, opinions, feelings, habits, aspirations, desires, and hopes must all be changed; for the new kingdom is altogether different from any other. Its promptings and labors are unlike all. Of necessity, then, there must be a new birth of the soul.

3. Corresponding with this and the other thought, was the requirement of good works — or, in different words, they are an imitation of the example given.

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father." "These things I command you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." Through their faith, thus exemplifying itself, they would obtain justification, and would be as they were designed, the "light of the world," and "the salt of the earth" — "a peculiar people zealous of good works."

4. In all this they were to find encouragement and support. Even in the greatest difficulties, they were to rely confidently upon the interpositions of grace — "to take no anxious thought in regard to meat or drink or raiment," but believe that in devout practices all things needful would be given. Thus did he make reverence and spiritual activity superior to all things else, and eminently safe — yea, as the only security against want or loss. God in this obedience would be with them; unobservant of it, He would ever be against them; and in such a position, how can any hope for success.

5. As a means of hope and triumph amid the afflictions of life, the inspiring idea of immortality was revealed. "As many as have borne the image of the earthy shall bear the image of the heavenly." "All who die in Adam are to be made alive in Christ." "This mortal must put on immortality, and this corruptible must put on incorruption," and the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory," must be fulfilled *in* and *for* all.

This furnishes for us the blissful prospect of a continuous being, and of attendant felicities in the resurrection home. It illustrates death as only a necessary change, a birth into life. It unclothes, disenthralls the soul; not that it may be found naked, but that it may be clothed upon with a better habitation, "a building of God, eternal in the heavens."

The inferences that may be drawn legitimately from such a thought, are, indeed, precious to him who has it. There is in prospect for him, always, the sympathy of love, if he will seek it — a reunion with friends — a union with angels and spirits before unknown, whose "joy is as the morning," and whose light and life "are as the noonday," glorious to behold; thrice glorious to feel.

Such is our inheritance in Christ, such the vision of the Gospel. Verily, its light is sufficient for all situations and exigencies, because it is most distinct, and clear, and perpetual. These are the great themes of Christ's wonderful communications to the living, but dying world; each of which,

though in name and profession familiar, is but imperfectly comprehended by any disciple in practical departments. What do we *feel* of God in our daily plans and labors? of his promises of favor in the straits through which we are made to pass? of the great work of repentance, or a conformity in practice to the divine likeness? of exemplifying in ordinary relations the spirit and power of a divine love? of an assurance that "God will withhold no good things from them who walk uprightly?" of the transporting fact of incorruption? of spirit recognition and sympathy? We are but little disciplined in these grand realities; hence, we are but indifferently the sons of God, and the followers of our Lord.

When we really appropriate and feed upon them, making them religious meat and drink, we shall have found an indwelling Christ, and a Christ in which to dwell. And his prayer to the Father, "That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us," will be answered abundantly. We shall then, virtually, eat his flesh and drink his blood; because by them came these infinite blessings; and shall have life in ourselves, and become the resurrection unto many dead in sin, who may find communion with it. Thus will be experienced in us these words of the apostle; "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." This is the fellowship of the Father and

of the Holy Spirit — "eternal life" given us "in Christ before the world began."

LET US PRAY.

Father; having heard Thy word, and being made acquainted by it with the way of Salvation, may we walk in it faithfully to Thine honor and glory. Through grace, may the flesh of Thy Son be to us "meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed." Teach us to live in Thy love and fear. Save us from sin. Quicken us by Thy spirit unto the perfection of Thy children; and, in the power of Thy mercy, permit us at last to praise Thee in immortality, through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

CHRIST SEEKING AND SAVING THE LOST.

BY REV. BENTON SMITH. SCRIPTURE LESSON, LUKE XIX. 1—27.

For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. — LUKE XIX. 10.

THE Hebrew pastures had no fences; and the open country was not intersected by roads with habitations upon them, as our open country is. The agriculturalists did not reside upon their lands; they lived in the towns and cities, and, when employed upon their lands, went out and lived upon them temporarily in tents, in caves, or entirely in the open air. The country is a volcanic region; and jagged mountains, steep precipices, and deep and narrow passes between the mountains, with numerous caves — the dens of wild beasts — are prominent features of the country.

In this lonely and open country sheep often strayed from the flocks. And the feelings and labors of the shepherds in seeking them would give peculiar interest and force to these words of the Saviour, — "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." All the prominent facts of their calling would be brought to mind, and teach them, by analogy, what it is to be lost,

the great superiority to themselves of him who was seeking them, and the spirit in which he would labor to save them. And this analogy which the Saviour suggested, and left his hearers to follow out, we would now trace for our instruction and comfort.

The common representation of the state of the lost, leaves the impression that it does not differ in different men. The careless, the profane, the sensual, and the criminal are represented as in the same state in the sight of God, and as exposed to the same danger. But lost conditions are as various as human character and life. We have been deceived into the impression that a man is not lost unless he is exceedingly sinful or exceedingly miserable. But Zaccheus, of whom our text was spoken, was a man of very rare moral excellence. He had regularly given one half of his income to the poor, and, as extortion was common in his business of farming taxes, he fortified himself against the temptation by obligating himself to restore fourfold all he should wrongfully collect. Yet of this generous, upright man, Christ said, he came "to seek and to save that which is lost." He was not lost in sin, but lost to a knowledge of God and His providence, lost to the holy influence of living in His presence. It is a sad thing for a child to be thrown fatherless and motherless upon the world. If it escape sinfulness it loses the affectional sunlight of home, that indefinable, constant, strong influence that raises the affections to rare perfection,

and produces a life of rare beauty; and his nature becomes like a flower that has grown in gloom. And he who lives out from the conscious care of Christ and God, loses that spiritual perfection which their presence can impart. In this sense Zaccheus was lost. Lost conditions, then, vary from simple ignorance of God, to the loathsomeness and wretchedness of the deepest moral degradation.

There is a lost condition that is very comfortable. A lost sheep might find plenty of excellent pasture, as good as it would have enjoyed under the shepherd's care, and feed on, careless of being lost. It has lack of nothing, and it suffers nothing. But, although very comfortable, it is unprotected, and exposed to beasts of prey. It may feed on for weeks, and escape unharmed; but when the enemy comes it will be helpless. This is the most deceptive of all lost conditions; for the evil of being lost is not always immediate danger or suffering. And if men are comfortable, and their business prospers, and they are in want of no earthly good, they are satisfied, and do not know they are lost, feel no need of Christ, and are unconscious that Christ is anxiously seeking them. These people may live many years in peace and prosperity. But when danger comes they have no strong arm to defend them; no Christian principles as a complete armor against temptation; no light upon their path that they may not stumble at the evil in their way; no truths respecting the goodness of God to

strengthen and comfort them in affliction; and they become the easy prey of doubts, and fears, and temptations.

We all need more moral and religious strength than we use in ordinary life. If all days were to be calm and bright, the oak need not stretch its roots so far, and they need not be so gnarled and twisted; if the elements were ever to be quiet, the builder need not lay his foundation so deep and strong, nor brace his building in every direction; if there were no storms upon the ocean, a frail vessel would answer the wants of commerce. The wide-spreading roots, the firm foundation, the heavy and tough timbers of the ship, are not for calm and sunny days, but for storms, that, when they come, the oak may stand, the house keep upright, and the vessel bear its precious freight in safety. Life has storms against which we need a strength of principle that is not required in the ordinary affairs of life. There are many who are upright and happy only because their lives have had no uncommon temptation nor uncommon sorrow. They have no firm root in Christ, no well founded Christian character; and when a great temptation or a great sorrow comes upon them they will fall. We must make ample preparation, not for the common, but the uncommon in human life. Be not deceived, therefore, by present comfort and safety; give yourselves to the care of Him who hath wisdom and strength.

There are lost conditions that are full of suffering. A straying sheep might fall over a precipice and disable itself, or wander into the deep passes and become the prey of some beast, or stray to a barren region and suffer from hunger. And there are many who have strayed from Christ and fallen into temptation, others have become the victims of crime, and others still are famishing for the bread from heaven. All these conditions vary, from the first slight departures from moral uprightness, to the loathsomeness and wretchedness of the deepest degradation.

But whatever may be the character of our lost condition, Christ is seeking us. We may not know it; we may hear no sound of voice or footstep. Yet he may be very near us; some rock of worldliness, some green hillock of pleasure, some pit of sin into which we have fallen, may hide him from our sight. He knows every danger to which we are exposed. He is as much superior to us in wisdom and foresight, as the shepherd is superior to his sheep. And we are as unconscious of how much we engross the attention and interest of One greater than ourselves, as the child is of the thought and labors and plans of the parent in its behalf. Much as we know of what has been done for us, we may after all know but little of what our Father in heaven is doing to save us. Our dangers are unknown to us; but they are plain to our Saviour who is anxiously seeking us. And it is only when we become Christians in our tenden-

cies that we become aware that we have long been the objects of Christ's solicitude. No words can express the joy of the moment when that truth flashes upon us. To know that in all the past, in our carelessness and indifference, in our guilt and suffering, Jesus has not ceased to seek us, melts us into willing obedience and love.

And he seeks us from a lively interest in every one of us. It was not alone the value of the sheep which prompted the shepherd to expend much time and labor in attempts to find it. His flock afforded him his only companions, for months together, in that open and lonely country. He was with them by night as well as by day. Connected with each member of his flock there was a history full of interest to him. And he could not rest if he knew one of them was either in pain or in danger; but would search anxiously on the mountain sides, at the foot of the precipices, and in the dangerous passes to find it; and if search were in vain, he would turn his steps reluctantly towards his flock, with a heart ever yearning after the lost one.

We have not realized, as we ought, the tenderness of Christ's interest in us individually. Because he lived on earth eighteen hundred years ago, and five thousand miles away, and we never enjoyed his society, it may seem to us that his interest in us can be only a general interest, such as a good man feels in his race. There are millions and millions of his fellow-men whom the good

man has not seen and never will see, although he wishes them well and is laboring to do them good. His interest in them cannot be like that which he feels in his child or some dear friend. For we rarely love perfectly more than a single individual, or, at most, a select company of our kind. But our Saviour feels an affection as strong and personal towards all mankind as we are capable of feeling towards a single individual. We cannot realize this without an effort. It is but seldom that the warmest friend will sacrifice his life for a companion; but "while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us." The language of our text is remarkable, — "The *Son of man* is come to seek and to save that which is lost." We might have expected something different; we might have expected him to say, the *Son of God* is come to save us. But those were not thoughtlessly uttered words. He wished to guard his hearers and all coming generations, against the impression that he was not like us in lively sympathy, in tender affection, and in quick, warm feeling. He called himself the "Son of *man*" to encourage us to reason from our own nature respecting his. And we may judge of him by ourselves without fear of making a fatal mistake. We are not saved by an infinite atonement in the death of the Son of God, or of God Himself; we are saved by one in whom human sympathy, tender affection, and lively feelings existed in perfection. And when we see what these sentiments, in their weakness and imper-

fection, will lead a shepherd to do to save his sheep, or a mother to save her child, we can form some conception what *he* will do for us, in whom they were perfect.

Hence he does not relax his labors although we may be doing nothing to save ourselves. Here, again, the analogy which the Saviour encouraged us to ponder, affords light. The shepherd does not know whether his sheep is comfortable, or bruised, or hungry. It may be carelessly feeding, or lain down, making no attempts to regain the fold. If he knows this he does not refuse to go in pursuit of it. And whatever may be our condition, Christ will never relax his exertions to save us, until all the children of God are safe within his care.

Our text affords both warning and encouragement. Let us not be deceived by the prevailing impression, that we do not need Christ until we are gross sinners and wretched in our sins. This impression has done and is doing incalculable evil. Though we should be as perfect as Zaccheus, giving half our income to the poor and fortifying ourselves against sin by obligating ourselves to restore four-fold all we should unjustly gain, we need the Lord Jesus. It is not the bad child alone that needs a home. The good child needs one to keep it where it is in moral goodness, and also to help it to greater attainments in excellence. And however excellent we may be, we need the Lord Jesus to help us to a more perfect life and charac-

ter. We can hardly have failed to notice that "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which *is* lost;" not that which *may be* lost at some far future time and in another world. We are not merely liable to be lost; we *are* lost; and need to be found and saved in the life that now is.

The text is full of encouragement and comfort. As we move in the midst of our fellow-men, we see many who, in their sad moral degredation, seem forsaken of the Almighty. It appears as if God had given them up to their sins, and to certain and endless ruin. But the Shepherd is seeking these lost, bruised, and suffering ones; and at last he will find them and save them; for "this is the Father's will which hath sent him, that of all which He hath given him he should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

LET US PRAY.

Our Father who art in heaven; We praise Thee for the life and words of Thy son our Saviour, for what he has done, and for what he is doing to make us Thy children in spirit and in truth. May we realize, as never before, that we are Thy children, needing our Father's wisdom to instruct us, and our Father's strength to uphold us lest we fall and suffer. And may we remember our great inheritance as Thy Children, even to grow into the likeness of Him who made us. And now if we are far away from Thy care in the country of sin,

if we are living in ignorance of Thee, and without love of Thee in our hearts, may the Lord Jesus find us; and in his presence may we become willing and loving children of God. We ask it in his name. AMEN.

DRESSING AND KEEPING THE GARDEN.

BY REV. S. GOFF. SCRIPTURE LESSON, GEN. II.

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.—GEN. II. 15.

THIS language we find in the account given by Moses of the creation, and has reference to Adam, the progenitor of the human race. Having finished the work of the first five days, and thus prepared the earth for a higher order of beings, on the morning of the sixth day, the Great Creator and Former of all things, "formed *man* of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." And having thus brought into being this crowning work of creation, we are told that "the Lord God planted a *garden* eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." And the text tells us for what purpose he was put therein. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden *to dress it, and to keep it.*"

"To dress it and to keep it." We regard these words as announcing the great, primary, and all-important object of man's earthly existence. And it shall be our aim, in this discourse, so far as we are

able, to unfold and develop this object. In carrying out our design, it will, of course, be necessary for us to say, whether we consider the account in Genesis as a literal history — a literal relation of facts, in all its parts — or whether we look upon it, as in part figurative and symbolical. And we will say in the outset, that, in our apprehension, the latter is undoubtedly the truth.

We know, indeed, that the great mass of professing Christians look upon the whole account as literal, and will consider it as little, if any, less than blasphemy, to contend otherwise. Eden is supposed to have been a literal garden; the "tree of life," and the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," literal trees; and the tempter, a literal serpent. And when our first parents sinned and were banished from Eden, it is supposed a literal sword, and a literal detachment of Cherubim from heaven, were placed at the east of the Garden, to guard the way of the tree of life. And much more that is equally fanciful and absurd. We say *absurd*, for that is not too strong a term to be applied here. For is it not absurd to suppose that these trees were literal trees, and that the tempter was a serpent, speaking with the human voice; and, till the curse was pronounced upon him, that he walked erect? and that the cherubim were really angels from a higher sphere? Surely, the bare statement of these things is sufficient to show that the account must, in part, be symbolical, yet veiling under the figures great and important truths.

We see no impropriety, indeed, in supposing that the human race sprung from one primeval pair; and that this pair came into being very much as Moses describes. Nor would it be a very great stretch of fancy to suppose that the spot of earth upon which they were placed was beautiful, attractive, and lovely, beyond what the eye of man has ever since beheld. The first human pair, when they came from the forming hand of their Creator, were innocent and pure. Though they were possessed of flesh and blood, made subject to vanity, and liable to sin, yet they were now spotless and sinless. The fires of passion had not yet been kindled; their hearts had not burned with wrong desire. The tempter had not been there with his subtle arts. They knew no wrong, and felt no guilt. Pure, unsullied, joyous innocence was theirs. They held sweet communion with their Maker, and enjoyed the smiles of His presence. And there is nothing absurd in the supposition that their outward condition corresponded with their inward state.

And thus their beautiful and lovely residence might fitly be called an "Eden," the "Garden of Eden," an earthly paradise. The word Eden signifies *pleasure*, *delight*, and hence might well be employed to express or designate the most beautiful of earthly habitations. But we do not believe that this is all which the word expresses, or is used to designate. For if it were, then we must consider the language of the text as only *literal*, and that

the great and only object of man's existence here, was to dress and keep this Garden. In other words, that man was made and placed here, only to till the ground and make provision for his physical wants.

My hearers, is this so? Is this the great object of man's creation? Were we made and placed here, only to cultivate the earth and provide things needful for the body, and thus live a life but one remove higher than the brute? If so, why was mind, why were intellect and moral nature, given us? Why were *we* made capable of knowing good from evil, of suffering so intensely when we do wrong, and of enjoying so much when we do right? Why are forms of ideal beauty and perfection ever presenting themselves to our minds; and why are we invariably inspired to seek after purity of heart and exalted moral excellence? And why are desires and aspirations after another, a more enduring and happy life, implanted in our bosoms; and why do we groan here in "bondage, toil, and pain," "waiting in earnest expectation for the manifestation of the Sons of God?"

No, no, my hearers, man is not alone a physical, animal being. He was made not alone to till the earth, and provide for the gratification of the animal appetites and passions. His whole mission here is not simply to eat and drink, to hoard up worldly goods, "to propagate his species," and then lie down, and die, and cease to be. But man has an intellectual, social, moral, and religious nature,

and is destined to exist when all things earthly shall have passed away. He is capable of rising high in the scale of virtue and moral excellence, and of enjoying a high degree of felicity on earth — a foretaste of the joys seraphic which await him in another and a better world.

And, as we have already remarked, when man came from the hand of his Maker he was innocent and pure. His moral nature was unstained and spotless. And if the term "Eden" or the "Garden of Eden," was appropriate to express the beauty and loveliness of his earthly habitation, we believe it quite as appropriately expresses his inward state, the beauty and loveliness of his moral and spiritual condition. And this we believe was the principal idea which the sacred historian designed to express. Hence where it is said that "the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it," we understand Moses as designing to teach that man was made and placed here on the earth in a state of innocence and purity, with powers and faculties capable of a high degree of cultivation and improvement; and in that cultivation and improvement, of yielding him a high degree of satisfaction and enjoyment. And that it was enjoined upon him, as the high behest of his Creator, to dress and to keep this intellectual and moral Eden.

Let us observe here, before we proceed further, the import of these terms — "To dress and keep." Were a person put in possession of a fine farm

or a beautiful garden, in a high state of cultivation, free from weeds and noxious plants, and capable of producing everything in the greatest abundance and the highest perfection, with a strict injunction to dress it and keep it, he would have no difficulty in understanding what was required of him. He would know that he must cultivate that farm or garden; that he must till the soil, that it may continue to produce as at present; and, if possible, improve its culture, that it may produce more abundantly. To this end he must keep out all weeds, and destroy all noxious plants. And not only so, but he must guard it from intrusion from without, from all foes of whatever character that might seek to enter it, and prey upon its fruits. And thus he would "dress and keep it."

In this sense we understand the injunction given to our first parents. At the time this command was given, their hearts were unpolluted, their moral natures uncorrupted, and were like a garden, if not in a high state of cultivation, yet free from the weeds of error, the noxious plants of vice, and capable of being so cultivated as to yield all the intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual fruits in the greatest abundance, and in the highest earthly perfection. All the faculties of the mind, all the powers of the moral and spiritual nature, were capable of being unfolded and expanded to an indefinite extent, and, at every advance, of adding to their happiness.

And they were to dress this garden of unsullied purity and heaven-bestowed innocence. They were to cultivate their minds by studying themselves, and the works of their All-wise Creator by which they were surrounded. They were to cultivate their social faculties by communion with each other, and with the God and Father of their spirits. And they were to cultivate their moral and spiritual natures by reflecting upon the power, wisdom, and goodness of their Creator as manifested in the works of his hands, and by cherishing gratitude and love, for their existence, their high and noble endowments, and all the blessings and mercies bestowed upon them. In one word, they were to make a proper use of all the means of intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual improvement bestowed upon them, and thus secure their own highest good, by glorifying God "in their bodies and in their spirits."

But the cultivation of this garden was not their whole duty. They were also to keep it. This implies that they were liable to abuse their privileges, to do wrong, to sin, and fall from their state of primeval innocence and purity — that they had foes against which they must guard, or they would be surprised, deceived, and robbed of their priceless treasures, their sweet and holy enjoyments. Hence they must watch as well as work; and, while cultivating their powers and faculties, keep the garden of the heart with all diligence. And such, indeed, was the fact. With the higher

endowments of his being, man had animal passions and sensual appetites, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and pride of life." And by these he was liable every moment to be deceived, thrown off his guard, and slain. Hence the propriety and the importance of the injunction, that by dressing and keeping the garden, the Eden of innocence, purity, and joy, he should obey the divine command, and secure the great end of his earthly existence.

But, alas, "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." The animal appetites were blind, and clamorous for gratification. Carnal mind whispered that the prohibition of the Creator was unjust, and the threatening untrue. And thus when the woman looked upon the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," she was deceived. To her blinded eyes the tree appeared pleasant, the fruit seemed "good for food, and to be desired to make one wise." And thus, blinded and deceived, she put forth her hand, and "took, and ate, and gave to her husband and he did eat;" and eating they *fell*, fell from the state of innocence and purity in which they were created, and involved themselves in shame, misery, wretchedness, and moral death. In other words, yielding to the "law in the members," instead of obeying the law of the mind, they violated the divine command, and *sinned*, involving themselves in all the awful consequences of transgression. Their innocence and purity — their Eden, their paradise, their Maker's

smiles — their consciousness of self-approval, sweet peace, and holy joy — all, all were gone. And in their place were shown guilt, remorse, the divine disapprobation, condemnation, and woe, and all the bitterness of moral death.

Such were the sad results of disobeying the divine command, of neglecting to heed the injunction of the text. And having once sinned, having once fallen, man had to struggle with evil, to contend with the powers of darkness. Divine aid was graciously vouchsafed. A Saviour, as "the seed of the woman," was promised, and the assurance given of the final victory, the final triumph of good over evil, in the crushing of the serpent's head, and the deliverance of the race from the power and the consequences of sin. But the victory is not yet gained. From the sin of the first created pair, the struggle has been going on; and all their descendants have been involved in it; for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And we, as they, and all, must struggle. But we have greater and better encouragement than they. For they must believe in a Saviour to come. But now the promised deliverer has made his appearance, and we have the assurance that "Satan shall be bound under his feet." He himself said, but a little while before the crowning act that completed the scheme of redemption, "Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto

me." With this assurance, let us engage in the warfare against sin and error, relying upon the divine promise, that we shall come off more than conquerors through him that loved us and died for us.

"All the reign of sin destroyed,
Shall Zion's King restore,
And from the treasures of the Lord,
Give boundless blessings more."

But not to dwell longer here, let us proceed to improve the subject to our own good. "To dress and keep" the garden of the heart, is as binding upon us, as it was upon the first-made pair in Eden. We were none of us made for a mere earthly, sensual existence. We do not answer the full end of our being when we only cultivate the earth and provide for our bodily wants, and make it the whole aim of our lives to gratify the passions and appetites of the flesh. But we have a higher nature, higher and nobler endowments, and were made for higher and nobler purposes. Man was made in the image of God; and, as we have more than once remarked, he has not only mind, a mind of "high capacious powers," but a moral and spiritual nature, and is allied to angel and archangel, to cherubim and seraphim, and even to God himself. He is capable, as many of the race have proved, of rising high in the scale of intellectual worth and moral excellence. He may so cultivate his moral feelings, so improve, and refine, and elevate the powers of the soul, as to adorn his

nature with all the graces of the Spirit, and, even in this imperfect state, shadow forth the image of his divine Creator. While living in this world, and it may be laboring and toiling hard for the means of his earthly subsistence, he may yet be above the world, and have his "conversation in heaven," and hold sweet and joyful communion with the Father of his spirit.

And this, it is most surely for his interest to do. He desires happiness. This is the end and aim of his being. For this he was made; and everything around and within him, when rightly used, has a tendency to secure to him this invaluable boon. And would man "dress and keep" the garden of his heart, would he sedulously guard against every foe to his happiness, would he control the passions, resist temptation, bar his soul to the entrance of sin, and cultivate diligently the higher faculties of his nature, he would secure his own best interests; he would be a child of God, and enjoy a foretaste of heaven on earth.

But, alas, how many fail to do this! how many take the wrong course, listen to the siren songs of the tempter, eat of the forbidden fruit, and are miserable and wretched all their days! My hearers, are there not hundreds and thousands all around us, yea, are there not many in our *very midst*, whose actions say that they look upon the injunction of the text, if indeed they ever thought of it, as literal, and that the great end of their being is to cultivate the ground, accumulate earthly treasures,

eat and drink, and enjoy the pleasures of sense? Are there not many who bend all their energies of body and soul to this end? who make no effort to cultivate their minds, and improve and elevate their moral feelings? who neglect the Bible and the Sabbath, the sanctuary and its services? and who live a merely sensual, animal life? Yes, it is even so. There are those whose whole aim is to enjoy the pleasures of sense. Others understand not only the text, but that other passage which says "work while the day lasts," literally. And they do work, *work*, *toil*, and *die*. They debar themselves of needful rest, and sometimes even of the common necessaries of life, that they may accumulate wealth, hoard up gold and silver. Surrounded with their broad acres in a high state of cultivation, and yielding abundantly; with their granaries full, and money at interest, they are yet too poor to provide the means necessary to the intellectual, moral, and religious improvement of themselves and their families. Business presses so heavily that the six days given for labor are not sufficient, and the seventh must be occupied; and there is no time to go up to the sanctuary, and worship God in the congregation of His people. *Poor?* Yes, my hearers, such people are *poor* — poorer than the poorest Christian, even though he beg his bread from door to door. They are destitute of the true riches, destitute of everything that renders life desirable. The mere worldling, the mere sensualist, is the poorest of all God's creatures, though millions of

dollars may be in his coffers. While he who has cultivated his mind, and disciplined his moral feelings; who has become a disciple of Christ, and "laid up his treasure in heaven," is *rich*, though sunk in the lowly vale of poverty. Why, my hearers, to take an example which you can all appreciate, the hero of that famous work of fiction, UNCLE TOM, abused, degraded, trodden under foot, beaten, scourged, and dying of his wounds, with his simple, yet firm and unwavering faith in God and the blessedness of the future life, was richer, ten thousand times richer, than the tyrannical, sensual, bacchanalian, infidel Legree, with all his worldly possessions. The former was the Lord's freeman, and while smarting under his brutal treatment, and fainting from loss of blood, he yet looked "through golden vistas into heaven," and enjoyed the full triumph of that faith which "overcomes the world." The latter was in the "lowest depths of hell," and writhing continually under the scorpion lash of a guilty conscience!

And though but few sink so low, and become so degraded and suffer so terribly as the inhuman wretch whose character has been so graphically sketched, yet it serves to show us what we *may* become if we neglect to dress and keep the garden of our hearts; if we fail to cultivate our moral and spiritual natures, and live only for this world. *Live* only for this world, did we say? My hearers, the sensualist, the mere worldling, does not *live*, in the true sense of that word. Life implies some-

thing more than eating, drinking, working, and wearing away time. To do this only is to desecrate and degrade all our God-given powers, and to merely *stay* here for a few fleeting years. All mere sensualists — all vices, and sin, and pollution, serve to debase our natures, and deprive us from realizing the true ends and aims of existence. While all moral purity — all virtue, integrity, and uprightness — all cultivation and improvement of the higher faculties of our nature, serve to dignify, exalt, and ennoble us — to bring to our hearts the sweet peace, and the unsullied joy for which we were designed by our wise and merciful Creator.

If, then, this world were our only home, and the grave our final resting place, it would be for our interest to obey the injunction of the text, and "dress and keep the garden" committed to our care; as by so doing we should add very much to our enjoyment during the brief period of our stay on earth. But when we look upon ourselves as immortal beings, as I trust those present do, and upon this life as but introductory to another, higher, and never-ending state of being, then the injunction becomes of paramount importance; as by a strict obedience to the divine command we may not only enjoy, in a high degree, the present life, but prepare ourselves, in some humble measure, for the exalted joys, and the unending felicities of the life to come.

We believe, my hearers, that there is an inti-

mate connexion between thé present state and the future, and that all the improvement and spiritual advancement we make here, we shall take with us when we pass away; and that if we have risen high in the scale of moral excellence, if we have disciplined well all our powers of mind and soul, we shall have a greater capacity for, and enjoy a far higher degree of happiness, when we enter upon our future destination, than we shall if we live in sin, and go down to the grave in darkness and error. *Before we can enjoy heaven, we must be prepared for it.*

Be it ours, then, "to dress and keep" the garden of our hearts. AMEN.

LET US PRAY.

All-wise and Everlasting God, our Heavenly Father, we look now unto Thee for Thy parting blessing. Thou hast granted us another season of social worship and spiritual communion. We thank Thee, O Father, for this privilege. Thou hast made us moral and religious beings, and surrounded us with all things needful to render life happy. Enable us, O most Merciful Father, to diligently cultivate all our powers and faculties of mind and soul; and to rightly improve the blessings which Thou dost so abundantly shower down upon us. May we control and subdue our passions, and dedicate ourselves unreservedly to Thy service. Forbid, we pray Thee, that we should live only for this world. But may we consider

whence and what we are, and whither we are tending; and live as those destined to an ever-ending existence in Thy presence.

And now, O Father, take us into a sacred nearness to Thyself. Guide us by Thy counsel through life. Keep us from evil, and enable us to live to Thy glory. Be Thou with us, we pray Thee, and comfort us in all our trials and sorrows. Support us in the hour of death; and finally receive us to Thyself, to glorify and enjoy Thee forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, THE DISCIPLES' CROWN.

BY REV. MOSES BALLOU. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ROM. VIII.

If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.—
ROM. VIII. 9.

I FEAR that there is a false impression in the minds of the Christian public generally, which, if it really does exist, I should be glad to have corrected. It is that we make, if any, by far too slight a distinction between virtue and vice; that in our views of the Divine government, we do not sufficiently estimate their importance; and that we think and speak of the Supreme Being as treating all precisely alike, without the slightest regard to their character or merits. Now this is entirely a misapprehension. True, we say, in the language of Scripture, that God is good unto all men, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. We rejoice to believe that He is kind even to the evil and unthankful; that the vilest sinner shares deeply His sympathy and affection; and that, by His free grace and mercy, He will finally raise all men to high and holy union with Himself.

But, what then? This is certainly far from supposing that He makes no moral distinctions among men; that He regards them as alike deserving, or cares very little what may be their life and moral character.

Christ would hardly have given his earthly labors to make men good and obedient, if virtue was no better than vice; nor would he have died to save men from sin, had he regarded vice and holiness as of equal value.

From the entire spirit of his teachings, as well as from his whole deportment, it is evident that he regarded sin in its true light. He looked upon it as the only thing in all the universe, to be feared and dreaded; and the immense sacrifices which he endured to save men from it, are sufficient proofs of the magnitude of its evil in his sight.

This fact we have never ignored, or attempted to deny. We have always admitted this broad distinction between good and evil; and acknowledged the divine declaration, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Say ye unto the righteous, that it shall be well with him, for he shall eat of the fruit of his doings; but wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

Reverencing these sentiments as strictly true, we freely admit also the declaration in the text; "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

But let us be careful that we do the text no in-

justice. Very possibly its common use may have fixed in our minds a false impression of its meaning.

I wish, therefore, that you would carefully consider the following facts:

1. The writer is far from affirming that those who have not Christ's spirit are not his in *any* sense of the term; though in *one* sense of it they may not be.

2. He is equally far from saying that those who are not his now, never shall be at any future time.

If you will turn to the seventeenth chapter of John, you will find the first of these suggestions very fully illustrated. In that memorable prayer to the Father, Jesus speaks of his disciples as those whom God had given him out of the world, and he recognizes them as his in a very peculiar sense. "I pray for them," he says; "I pray not for the world, but for them thou hast given me; . . . . . thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word."

It is very evident, then, that those who were chosen to be the early adherents of the Gospel, the personal friends of Jesus, and the first teachers of his religion, were regaded as *his* in a very special manner; that is, as his disciples, his followers, those who obeyed his precepts, and who were, therefore, *his characteristically*. In this sense, of course, the words of the text become very plain and significant. Persons who have not the spirit of Christ are not his in the same manner

those were. That is, they are not his true disciples; not his followers, — not his characteristically.

But in another sense, equally evident, may we not say that they were his; and, indeed, that all men are his, just as fully and really as those who have already been born into his Divine Kingdom? It seems to me that no one can deny this who takes into account the whole scope of the Scriptures upon this subject. It seems to me to be plainly intimated in the prophetic writings. It was said in the Psalms, that God would give him the heathen as his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as his possession. And I do not see how any proper construction can be put upon these terms without admitting all which I claim for them.

I am strengthened in this conviction, very much, both by the declarations of John the Baptist and of Christ himself upon this subject. John says, on one occasion; "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands;" and Jesus says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father;" and again, in the prayer already referred to, he adds, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine," meaning plainly, that all that belonged to the Father, belonged to him also.

God had given all things, — the intelligent universe, — to Christ. In a certain important sense, they were all his, — his to subject unto himself; his to purify and redeem; to realize the Divine assurance that through him the world might be saved.

Now it will be seen that there is no contradiction in these two cases; for, while it is clear that all souls belong to Christ for this high and glorious purpose, it is still equally true that none are his characteristically, except such as strive to live and walk in his spirit. The principal idea of the text, then, is simply this: To be a true disciple, a true follower of Christ, it is essential that we have his spirit within us.

Before proceeding to consider directly what is involved in this statement, I would take occasion to suggest that it has been very generally misapprehended. There has ever been a tendency to vest the chief efficacy of religion in other things. Creeds and dogmas; speculative opinions, rituals and ceremonies, — these have taken precedence of the spirit of Christ.

In many cases they have been made the basis of church union and fellowship. The amount of a man's religion has been weighed and measured by them. Or, if he failed to conform to certain human standards in this respect, he was coolly pronounced as a man of no religion; though he might have far more of the spirit of Christ within him, than those who would rejoice at his excommunication.

Now I do not say that creeds and forms are of no importance. I believe that they are important. I should be very glad to see every man holding my creed, and worshipping according to my ritual, if it were possible; but still I never dreamed of

identifying all true religion with these, so far as to suppose that there were no good Christian souls outside of their embrace. I rejoice to believe that there are good persons of all creeds, good hearts in all churches; and, doubtless, there are many, too, who belong to no church, and who still are regarded by Christ as among his true disciples.

What I would especially affirm, is, that having the spirit of Christ within us, is by far the most important feature of a true Christian. It is paramount to all other considerations. He who has this spirit may be recognized as a true follower of the Divine Master, even if he has misapprehended the creed and the ritual; while he who has not this spirit, though he may have the creed and ritual perfect, is, after all, no true disciple.

The spirit of Christ, — what is it? I propose to suggest to you some of its more important elements, or those which I regard as among its most prominent features.

I. *Loyalty to truth and right.* That Christ's life was a remarkable exemplification of this, no one can doubt, who receives the evangelical history. His character, in this respect, stands alone in the annals of the world's heroes. No man, so far as I know, has ever made more than a distant approach to its perfections. There have been those, doubtless, among men, of very remarkable moral powers; men, who, in some very trying emergencies, have stood up nobly against evil

influences and consequences, perhaps, when most others would have fallen.

In some cases, I have no doubt, temptations have been overcome, as great almost as those which assailed Jesus. In the lives of some moral heroes such instances may have occurred at particular times; but I know of no case except that of Christ, in regard to which this was uniform and invariable. With him there was no failure. Whatever the occasion, time, or circumstances, it was always the same with him. He had but one question to ask in deciding his course. What is true and right? When this was determined, there was no further doubt or hesitation. No considerations of policy or expediency seemed to weigh anything in his mind. None of the worldly influences which ordinarily bend us so easily, appeared to move him a hair's breadth.

He was tried, to be sure, terribly tried, at almost every step in his journey. He was said to have been tempted in all points as we are. Every devil that ever insinuated an evil thought or inclination into a human soul, was lurking along his pathway. He was assailed by them, in some form, at almost every step in his pilgrimage. But, all in vain! He might have his trials and his sorrows, more bitter than ever mortal bore; but still he was always loyal to his best ideas of duty.

Now if he had endured all his sufferings in the attainment of some selfish ends; if he had encountered them in the pursuit of wealth, or station, or

power, or as the result of an unhallowed ambition, struggling for empire and worldly dominion; the case would seem radically different. We might pity the folly which would sacrifice so much to gain so little; but we should not feel that sympathy for his agony, or that admiration for his heroism, which now thrills us from the conviction that his cause was one of profound benevolence. It was for us that he toiled, wept, and prayed; for the salvation of humanity that he labored, suffered, and died. And when we reflect, too, that this was a voluntary work on his part; that he might have avoided it had he chosen to do so, but that he calmly and deliberately preferred it, simply because it was right and good; it helps us to a faint conception of the true grandeur and nobility of his spirit.

This, then, is one of the first characteristics of his true disciples. No man can be a true follower of Christ, who does not cherish loyalty to duty.

How is it with us in this respect? Do we feel that it is an imperative obligation pressing upon us always? or do we treat it as we do some other virtues; practice it when it is convenient only? Probably, in a majority of cases, inducements to adhere to what is true and right, will counterbalance all temptations to the contrary; and, of course, in all such instances, there is no especial merit in the discharge of our duty. It is an easy virtue that waits on convenience.

But how much more than this are we ready to

do? Are we prepared to pledge our faith to it always? Are we ready to say that we will abide by it under all circumstances? That let the obstacles be what they may, or the temptations however powerful, we will ask only for what is true and right; and, like our Divine Master, if need be, take life in our hands and follow it even unto death? Let us bear in mind, then, the declaration of the text, and remember that our discipleship demands this of us.

II. *Another prominent trait in the spirit of Christ was kindness.*

In treating of this peculiarity, I feel that it is very necessary that you should properly distinguish between that mistaken tenderness which will allow its object to cherish any error, or practice any wrong, rather than cross its feelings, or thwart its inclinations.

True kindness sometimes needs to put on the aspect of severity. It must learn to frown as well as to smile, whenever frowns are necessary, And we know very well that there are occasions which do demand them.

Even the great love of God, the highest and purest love in the universe, has ordained pains and tears for us. They are needed for our training and discipline, and the far-seeing goodness of the Almighty, therefore, cannot withhold them.

Now, the love of Jesus was of this wise character. It was not a blind tenderness, but a pro-

found regard to our true welfare. It sought always our highest and best interests; and was ready to sacrifice to these, if necessary, the fancies or pleasures of the passing moment.

Thus, although Christ felt a deep and earnest love for all men, it did not, for one moment, make him hesitate in correcting their errors or attacking their vices. Nay, so far from it, I may say that he loved them too well not to do it. He could not bear to see their minds darkened by false notions, or their hearts defiled by the impurities of sin. And he therefore assailed the Pharisee for his heathenish dogmas, and the sensual worldling for his vices. He knew that in truth alone there was perfect freedom; in purity alone there was perfect peace.

True, there was no personal pleasure to him in the rebuke itself; but he saw that their highest and best good demanded it. It is always painful to a good mind to attempt the work of a reformer; and when Jesus was denouncing the bitter woes that must fall upon the ungodly, his heart was so full of sympathy that he wept as a mother would weep for a wayward child.

I have always regarded this as one of the strongest proofs of the deep love which he cherished for the world. Had he cared less for the true welfare of man, had he felt simply the easy tenderness of the parent which would give its child sugar-plums when the bitter draught was far more needed, I might have doubted whether his kind-

ness was genuine. I might have supposed that it was chiefly selfishness, or moral cowardice. It is so much more easy to fall in with the errors and vices of the world, than to stand up in opposition to them, that the man who loves his own comfort better than truth and right, will be most sure to do so. He always smiles and calls every man a clever fellow whatever may happen to be his faults or his vices. In this way he puts himself in opposition to no one. And it is such a very comfortable way of getting along in the world, that I am always suspicious that the man who practices it, has quite as much selfishness as true kindness.

In this respect, however, Christ proved the genuineness of his attachment sufficiently. However opposed to his personal comfort or painful to his own heart, he loved men too wisely and well to spare their errors, their vices, or their follies. How strikingly he displayed his affection in his dealings with the criminals! "Neither do I condemn thee; go, sin no more!"

Here then, again, the subject makes its appeal directly to our own hearts. How far are we partakers of this trait in Christ's spirit? Do we strive to cultivate this genuine affection for all men? I mean that deep moral regard which is stronger than selfishness and the love of ease? Are we ready to work for them, for their spiritual improvement? Have we moral courage sufficient to stand up alone, if need be, and do battle with their false and injurious dogmas? to oppose firmly but

kindly their bad habits, their vicious inclinations, and sensual lusts? I pray you put these questions solmenly to your own souls, and then recall the apostolic declaration, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

III. There is still another peculiarity of Christ's character which I will briefly refer to, and leave the subject with you. *It is confidence in the Supreme Being.*

Although Christ never seems forgetful of his own duties, or of the responsibility of the work especially assigned to himself, still he always seems to carry about with him the conviction that, after all, there was one far greater than he was, — one who ruled over all things, and in the mighty sweep of whose dominion all lesser agents found their orbits, as the stars shimmer in the great world-system. The infinite God has his thoughts, plans, and purposes, and those over-ride the operations of all subordinate existences. Our wishes may be thwarted; our plans may fail; our purposes may never be realized; but with the Almighty, failure is impossible. He is the ultimate, the supreme, the highest power in the universe; and over all things else, His will and pleasure fling the arms of irresistible control.

Now, in all his proceedings, Christ never loses sight of this glorious reality. He leans upon one higher and greater than himself. He goes to Him in his trials, and supplicates Him for strength.

And how childlike and implicit is the confidence with which he trusts in Him! He knows that his own efforts may, for the time, be ineffectual; that obstacles may seem to defeat him, and the powers of earth trample him down; still he does not falter for a single moment. His heart is full of hope and trust, for he knows that the might of God will finally give him the victory. He goes about his work, therefore, with a quiet and serene heart. Trials may assail him, but he feels that they are temporary. Dark clouds may envelop him, but he knows that the sun shines above them. And always to his believing soul, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

I confess that there are few traits in the character of Jesus, which are more interesting to me than this, — his perfect submission to, and his entire reliance upon the great but tender arm of the Father. It was a tower of strength, upon which he could fall back at any moment in safety. And with the balm of this assurance interfused through his soul, he could encounter the trials of his stormy career, with an inward peace and joy that nothing could take away. In this blessed trust, the fountain of his comfort was never disturbed. The current of his life might be wrought into giant waves upon the surface, but the quiet of its hidden sources was still the same.

You have seen something analagous to this, in the effects of a storm upon the ocean. When the winds have been let loose in their fury, and the vis-

ible waters have been piled into mountains; if you pierce this eternal din and tumult, far down in its clear depths you shall find them sleeping as quietly as the babe in the arms of its mother.

Yes; in the great eternal bulk of the ocean, though there may be hidden currents, like the tidal flow in a human system, yet there is a serene peacefulness about them that is never broken by any tempest that sweeps its broad surface. So with the soul of Christ, resting upon the arm of the Almighty Father. In his stern conflicts with the antagonist forces of the world, he might be tossed and apparently broken; but still there was peace, and joy, and triumph, from the light of God's love, that rested upon the depths of his spirit.

And now what should hinder you and I from cherishing the same spirit? Why may we not all have the spirit of Christ within us? become sharers of his labors, and partakers of his joys? Certainly we shall, so far as we are his true followers. And here is an infallible test by which we may measure ourselves at any time. We can see by appealing to this standard, how far we are from the Master, or how nearly we may be approaching him.

Let us have his loyalty to truth and right; his kindness and regard for other's good; and above all things, his unfaltering reliance on his Heavenly Father. Copy his example at all times; and then we may not only be counted among his true followers here, but receive the welcome plaudit here-

after,—"Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." AMEN.

LET US PRAY.

O Thou, from whom all good cometh; sanctify and bless to us the meditations of this hour. Give unto us the spirit of the Lord Jesus, Thy dear Son. May clear conceptions of his spiritual glory come now freshly to our thoughts. And while these shall still more endear him to our hearts, and fill us with admiration for his exalted worth; may they also awaken within us stronger desires to imitate him, and to conform our lives to his holy example.

We pray Thee, be very near unto us always; and especially in trials, temptations, and sorrows; and bring us at last into Thy kingdom of immortal life and glory, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. AMEN.

IT IS WELL.

BY REV. A. J. PATTERSON. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 2 COR. V.

Is it well with the child.—2 KINGS IV. 26.

THIS question is the natural voice of our brotherly love. It is not at all times the bearer of the same solicitude. We hear it daily in the public street and by our own firesides, when there is no thought of another answer than that it is well with the child. When friend meets friend, his fraternal sympathy is not satisfied with the assurance that it is well with him he meets; he enquires for his household; and if the answer comes full-toned and joyous, "It is well," he goes about life's business with light-hearted unconcern. But if disease has passed the household portal, and some beloved one is a sufferer from its invasion, so that the answer changes tones, and instead of glad accents the bitter tidings "it is not well" must be divulged, how quickly the sympathy of our humanity asserts its sway! How speedily we become cognizant of the fact that we dwell in a land of brothers!

And then if we are already aware that it is not well with our neighbor's household, how full of solicitude becomes the Prophet's question, "Is it well?" We almost tremble in breathless anxiety for the answer; now a flush of hope, then a shadow of fear lest it may not be well. So strong and deep are our affections, so closely inwoven with the tendrils of our brother's heart, that his sorrow becomes our sorrow; we mourn with him over life's little ills, we rejoice with him amid its bubble pleasures. This is a noble element of our humanity and cannot grow too luxuriantly.

But while we feel deep concern for the temporal welfare of our loved ones, and enquire daily after the simple health of the body — while I grant that the natural usage of our text goes no farther than this, that it seeks no larger solution than the problem of physical health, — it has been tortured into another service by the creeds of Christendom, and now perhaps no more common is the question, "Is it well with the body?" than that other more momentous question, "Is it well with the soul?" So deeply have our ideas been impressed by it, we sometimes almost imagine that its voice is akin to the innate language of every man which cries so ardently after immortality. So much more has been preached about the condition of the life to come than about the reality of that life, that we almost wonder if the endless query concerning its good or ill, is not the intuition of our humanity. So long has man asked concerning his departed

brother, "Is it well with him?" that the soul has become a prey to unnecessary doubts and fears, and now when the lamp of life flickers and dies, it is, alas, a common thing to hear the neighbors and acquaintances speculating about the probabilities of happiness or misery, and (thanks to the divine within us) striving to construct some foundation of hope for the lost one — something which will not conflict with the specifications of the creed.

But these questions are not always the sure paths to a favorable conclusion. Sometimes, in order to square the chance of happiness by the creed, salvation is considered as utterly beyond the reach of such a one's attainment. And, if any soul settles down in the gloom of such a doubt, how hopeless is its sorrow! We should think that the heart which enquires so tenderly after a neighbor's physical ills, would be utterly crushed by the thought of an endlessly miserable soul.

That this solicitude is not the native voice of man, is evident from the history of the past. We see grey-haired patriarchs in the days of earliest record, wondering, "If a man die shall he live again?" and sending their voiced wonder through the centuries to the very gateway of the present. We see uninspired philosophers voicing the same query. It is universal as the heart of man. It has sprung up spontaneously since the dawn of the world.

But where do we see the patriarch wondering if he shall be happy in the land beyond the grave!

Where do we see him doubt the beneficence of such a gift? Ah, he was content to ask continually concerning the life itself. He did not doubt the good heart of the Jehovah of his trust and worship. He had passed through no experiences which constrained him to ask about the probable benefit of that existence, should it be conferred. Heathenism had not blotted the dim vision of his desires with the smoke of Tartarus.

Though this doubt may pervade some of the philosophy of the ancients, it is, nevertheless, a child of heathenism, and not an intuition of the human soul. Neither is it learned on the fair pages of nature's ever open book. What is there in the beautiful picture of a world renovated by the bursting life of spring, to speak of anything but joy and beauty in the reality which it prefigures? Does the flower say, it is not well? Does the morning carol of the bird repeat the answer? Is the grass a robe of mourning, and the sunlight darkness? Such, it seems to me, they should speak and look, that trusting man may not hope too much for the future, but may see and know the worst, if anywhere in the "to-come" the endless question, "Is it well?" is to meet with the changeless answer, "It is not well," to a single immortal soul created in the image of God.

But what answer gave the Shunamite woman to Elisha who propounded the text.

"Is it well with thee?" said he, by his servant. "Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the

child?" And she answered, "It is well." And the sound of her words fell upon the ear of the Prophet and awakened no rebuke. They stirred the cedars of Carmel, and no voice came from its rocky recesses saying, she had uttered an untruth.

How dissimilar the conditions of the three of her household; and yet she gave but one answer to the question. Her husband was at home, perhaps with bowed head and heavy heart. She was a messenger to the Prophet, and with beast and servant had travelled a weary distance to seek him upon the mountain. The child, their only child, was lying upon a bed in an upper room; there was no light in his eyes, no color upon his lips, no motion in his breast. Pale, and spiritless, and still he lay, and the state of his sleep they called, and we call it, *death*.

Ah, did that mother whose boy had left her childless; that mother who lived in the age of prophecy, upon whose heart the healing hope of immortality had never dropped its calm; that mother who had never heard of Him who unsealed the sepulchre and gave *us* our living faith; that mother who had only the Jehovah of the Hebrew on whom to lean, and not the Father of the Christian, — did that mother say, "It is well with my child?" Yes, calmly and resignedly she measured the words. They came up from her heart which had never learned to doubt. They were born of reliance upon the Mighty God of Elisha. He gave

the child, he took again his own; and whether to a life immortal translated, or shut in the silence of annihilation, she felt that he who led her people through the sea and through the wilderness, who fed them in famine by his miracle-working greatness, did all things well. Though her child was cold and still as the rocks of the mountain, she could not say that any evil had befallen him. As with her husband and herself, who lived and breathed the air of mortality; so with her child, the light of whose eye had gone out like a taper, it was well. God lengthened their span. He did it for some wise end. He took the child; but with the three it was well.

This calm resignation, found in another than our Christian age, may furnish us with material for beneficial meditation upon the subject of death.

We look upon the pale messenger as an enemy. We call him the "King of Terrors." We, who have learned from the life of Christ, his actual demonstration of immortality, and therefore his interpretation of man's intuitive longings, that death is but the gateway to immortal happiness; that it is not, in the abstract, the sunderer of ties, but the instrumentality of everlasting reunion, *we* call death an enemy, when we look upon the human hopes which he crushes for a little time, to bid them bloom forever. Do we not hide the light of our Christian faith when we call him an enemy? Methinks we not only ignore our faith, but we go

farther and deny our confidence in God. Where is the fresh confiding reliance of the childless Shunamite? Where the submission of him who lost his all at a single stroke, and blest God in the darkest of his sorrows? These had not the light of our time; they had only nature's instructive admonition and intuitive yearning; yet we have the example of their trust.

It seems to me, if that Shunamite could say of her child, "It is well," when Christ had not yet broken the bars of death; if death itself, merely as a part of the Divine plan was good, its office-work well, for even her only child; *we* who share this larger light should let its beams enkindle at least an equal trust. Can we not trust Him on whom we depend for every breath of existence now we have been told he is our Father, when the bereaved mother of so long ago could trust the Creator? When we have been taught to lean upon him as the child leans upon the strong protection of its earthly parent, can we not trust the divers issues of every dispensation? And yet it seems to me trust is too feeble a tribute from hearts so bountifully blest.

The answer of the Shunamite, "It is well," should touch our hearts with all its wealth of meaning unfolded by divine revelation, and awaken corresponding gratitude. Not only acquiescence in God's ways, but cheerful hope and faith which never know a waning, should be ours. Before us not afar, are the sunny islands of immortal

life. There the Christianity which has blessed us and our time, bids us look for the departed treasures. We see them through the glass of faith, with palms in their hands, and the song of victory over death upon their lips. We see the pathway we are treading, stretching surely towards the same goal, and an unbroken and eternal reunion awaiting us. Shall we not say of death and the departed more than did the childless mother before these Christian visions glorified the understanding? She said, when asked of her household, "It is well." We should rejoice exceedingly that the friends we so loved are free; that they are surrounded with glory so intense; and that they are not so distant from us, but we shall soon go to them. Every sand-drop from the glass of time lessens the way. Every heart-throb brings us nearer the immortal goal. But do we rejoice? Do we ever say from the heart, It is well? Alas, the Christian world is sadly defective in this trust! How it needs more confidence in God! As I look upon its earthward tendencies, I wonder if Christianity has at all strengthened its trust. It seems to me the cold beating of its infidel heart is colder than in the days of the Shunamite. How many mothers of to-day, can say of the dear dead, "It is well."

I know these partings are the bitterness of life. We miss those who have gone before. We would fain have them hand in hand with us while we tarry in earthly habitations. But do we ever com-

pare the littleness of this life, the mere speck of these bereft years, with the eternity of enjoyment and reunited love which lies before us? Do we take into the comparison that no more sin and sorrow enter into their experience now that they have laid off the earthly?

The temporal separation of friends should teach us a lesson in this. When our friends leave us for a residence in a distant land or a distant city, do we slack the busy tide of our daily employment and go mourning over their departure? No; we go to our toil buoyed by the glad hope of meeting again, for but a few days perhaps; yet that hope is our life and joy. It enters into all our thoughts, and penetrates them with light. The hour of parting waves in memory, and is submerged in the hope of meeting. We reconcile ourselves to their absence by thinking that their earthly interests are subserved by it; and when time proves to us that these interests have gained by the removal, we are entirely reconciled, and the periodical meetings are anticipated as the concentrated enjoyment of years.

Now, to such absence we are reconciled and led to say, "It is well," when it enhances only temporal interests or happiness, and does not free our friends from a single pang; does not exempt them from sickness; does not extract the lacerating sting of sin. We hope incessantly to meet them, though we know that parting will fol-

low that meeting, and thus forever in alternate succession until death closes the scene.

When our friends leave us for that land fairer than earthly prairies, that "city which hath foundations" laid by other than human hands; "where sickness never comes; where grief no more complains;" where the enduring riches are garnered; where farewells are not spoken; where sin shall be finished, — can we not summon the same reasoning to our aid and be reconciled? Can we not say, their interest and happiness are subserved by the removal; subserved in no finite, transient manner, but for eternity?

True, the years of our separation are uncertain years; but earth has duties for us to fill them with. And, whether they be few or many, they are measured to us in unfailing mercy; and their termination will ensure a meeting with those whom we now miss from our sides; a meeting whose joy shall not be suppressed in its uprising by the fear of another separation. Can we not cherish this faith, until the gloom of the present and the past are irradiated by it? until the memory of *these* partings is submerged in the hope of meeting?

If before the age of Christianity death was regarded with such complacent resignation; if it was called a "sleep," a "gathering to the fathers;" if childless mothers could say of its devastations, "It is well,"—it seems to me we, who have shared the ministry of him who came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly, should

cultivate the faith which his doctrines impart, and bring forth the fruits of a calm and never-failing confidence in God. Instead of torturing the imagination with visions of trouble in the future, and saying in reference to the departure of any soul, "It is not well," we should accept the gospel revelation of life and immortality, and receive the largest hope which that revelation imparts.

Upon its illumined pages we see the glad truth that "in the resurrection they are equal unto the angels;" that "they are children of God being children of the resurrection;" and that "they shall die no more." To satisfy our largest desire, the Redeemer conveyed the truth that death is not a "sleep," but an awaking; that the resurrection is not afar, but near. "The dead," said he, "*are* raised." "All *live* unto God."

What more can we ask to inspire that abundant life which the Saviour came to impart? Faith plumes her wing at the reception of such good tidings, and enables us to say, if we heed her instruction, not only "it is well with the child," but cherishing the unwavering trust of Paul, to say also that death shall not be able to separate us from the love of God; "for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Brethren, let the question which the prophet Elisha propounded to the Shunamite woman, be often upon your lips. I would not have you indif-

ferent to the earthly welfare of those about you. Cultivate sympathy and brotherly love. These are the glory of life. But let the faith of Christianity fortify your hearts against that distrust of God's Providence which would ask, concerning those who have left the habitations of mortality, "Is it well?" With our limited conceptions of God's ways, we speak of good and ill as interspersed in this life, and enquire of our neighbor, "Is it well with thee, and is it well with thy household?" But of the unseen and eternal, these are unfitting questions. In the issues of God's dispensations there can be no permanent ill. He is absolutely good. Of Him are all things, through Him are all things, and to Him all things tend. When the goal is attained, all will be well. When our visions are unsealed by the life immortal, we shall perceive that what our finite sense termed ill in this life, was but a necessary part of the great and wonderful plan of human redemption. Therefore, brethren, be ye kindly affectioned one toward another, and full of hope in God, whose love and pity are the unfailing pledge of eventual good; and cultivate that steady trust which can say in the midst of the deepest affliction, "It is well."

LET US PRAY.

O Thou who art the everlasting rock of the Hebrew's reliance, we would devoutly thank Thee for the mission of that revelation which brings Thee nearer unto our hearts, in all the tenderness of Thy Fatherhood.

Help us, we pray, to exemplify our thanksgiving and gratitude by lives of devotion to Thee, and duty to one another. May the faith that Thou doest all things well, inspire in our hearts that calm reliance and unwavering trust, which can say in sincerity, continually, "It is well."

Father of mercies, heal the nations with this faith, and hasten the time when "all Thy works shall praise Thee, and Thy saints shall bless Thee." We pray in his name who brought life and immortality to light. AMEN.

WALKING WITH GOD.

BY REV. C. W. MELLEN. SCRIPTURE LESSON, PROV. V.

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.
GEN. V. 24.

THE sacred writers have given us but two or three brief notices of the Patriarch Enoch, and hence but little comparatively is known of him. And yet, the few touches which they gave to his character are sufficient to show that he was a man of faith and piety, of eminent holiness of heart and life. The age in which he lived was one of feeble moral light and goodnesss, and while the mass of men threw off all restraint and lived in open rebellion against heaven, Enoch kept himself free from the sensuality and sin with which he was surrounded, walked with God, and lived a divine life. And by his faith, his spirituality, and moral goodness, he obtained the precious testimony that he pleased God. The text contains a short but eloquent description of a good man. Indeed, no higher commendation, no more exalted eulogy, can be pronounced upon a man than that he walks with God; and no greater reward can be enjoyed,

than the consciousness of pleasing Him. To walk with God is to have a vivid sense of His presence; to live a life of communion, of sweet and endearing companionship with Him; to love and obey His laws; and in this way to find acceptance with Him.

It was doubtless, thus, that "Enoch walked with God." It is mentioned, as one of the results of his piety and faith in God, that he was translated, so that he should not see death. In the language of the text, "He was not, for God took him."

In regard to the nature of Enoch's translation, there exists among Christians a diversity of opinion. Some believe it to be a literal, and others a moral and spiritual translation. It would be foreign to my present purpose to go into a lengthy discussion of this question; yet it may not be amiss, in passing, to direct the attention of the hearer to one or two facts, which will throw much light upon it.

In the first place, the idea of a literal translation, that Enoch was taken up bodily from earth to heaven, seems to be in direct contravention of the word of God. It contradicts the fiat of the Almighty, uttered in the beginning in respect to all flesh; viz., "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." It also contradicts the express assertion of the divinely inspired apostle, who explicitly affirms that Enoch did die. In the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, he mentions several of the ancient patriarchs who were distinguished for their piety and faith in God, such as

Abel, Enoch, Abraham, and Noah, and then says, "*These all died in faith.*" This declaration I regard as proof positive that Enoch did experience the change involved in physical death. But it may be urged that the same apostle affirms, that Enoch "Was translated that he should not see death;" and the inference is that God took him to a state of blessedness without obliging him to pass through death. But are we quite sure that such was the apostle's meaning? May not his declaration be of the same import as the Saviour's when he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

How or in what sense is the Christian believer exempt from death? Can he, by faith in Christ purchase an immunity from the dissolution of his mortal, perishable body? By no means. For whatever is mortal must die. But the higher, the spiritual life, which is derived from Jesus, the seat of which is the soul, is imperishable. The ravages of decay and death can never reach it. Hence, he who truly believes in Christ, as truly lives, and lives perpetually. By his strong and vivid faith in God, immortality, and heaven, he acquires clearer spiritual insight. He lays hold upon and enjoys those things which God hath said shall be, as though they were present and perceptible. He is enabled to see that what we call death, is but the beginning of a higher, diviner life, a beautiful and progressive life, amid glorious

scenes and with angel-companions. And with this joyous prospect before him, death is vanquished and swallowed up in victory. Passing from the present to a future existence is a spiritual birth, a translation, an entrance into a better country because a heavenly. And very much like this, I think, must have been the translation of Enoch. Indeed, it seems to me impossible to reconcile any other theory with the teachings of the Scriptures. The apostle affirms that Enoch was translated *by faith*; that he died in faith, not having received the fulfillment of the promises, but having seen them afar off; and was persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

But we need not dwell longer upon this point. Enough is it for our present purpose to know that Enoch was a man of faith and piety, that he walked with God and lived a holy life, and that in these respects he has left us an example which it would be well for us to follow.

The object of the present discourse will be to show how a person may walk with God, and the benefits to be derived from so doing. There are several things requisite to a walk with God; and among them we would mention,

I. A strong and unwavering faith in His existence and perfections. The apostle says that "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to Him, must believe that He is, and that

He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Hence, the first thing necessary to enable a man to walk with God is a full conviction of his existence. And every person who sincerely desires it may possess and enjoy this faith. For the evidences of the existence of God are so many, so plain, and palpable, that every intelligent man who thinks or reasons upon the subject, must believe that there is a God, who is the Creator of all things, the Supreme and Righteous Ruler among the nations. I am not about to reiterate any of the numerous arguments that may be adduced to prove the existence of God, for I cannot believe it to be necessary. Indeed, it seems to me the time has come when we may well dispense with labored efforts to prove what every man's reason and consciousness tell him must be true; when we shall be justified in assuming what no man of a sound mind can ever doubt. And a strong faith in this important, this fundamental truth in all religion, is the first step towards that state of the mind and affections necessary to enable us to walk with God.

II. We must have entire confidence in Him, be agreed with Him, and reconciled to His will. The Prophet inquires, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" and the answer must be in the negative. For to have two persons walk together, in the Scripture sense of the phrase, there must be an affinity, a oneness of heart and

soul between them. They must be united in love, and keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. If the law of repulsion keep them apart, if discord or alienation of feeling are allowed to exist between them, it is useless to attempt to walk together.

And so in the case before us. If we would walk with God, we must become one with Him — one in spirit and purpose. We must cherish in the depths of our souls those affections and principles which enter into the Divine nature, and which will bring us into an entire and perfect agreement with Him. His love must be shed abroad in our hearts, creating within us a conscious harmony of the soul with God, inspiring us with the desire to be wholly His, and to have all our powers devoted to His service and glory.

We must realize the great truth that He is our Father, and have such views of His paternal character and government, that we shall cherish a filial faith in Him, and be reconciled to all the allotments of His Providence. And reconciliation to God implies an entire satisfaction with His disposition, will, and purposes. It pre-supposes that there is no principle involved in the Divine government, and that nothing can result from that government, but what meets the cordial approbation of the most benevolent feelings of the Christian soul. Were we to discover something in the government or dealings of God, which conflicts with our highest

ideas of justice and love, we could not be reconciled to Him.

We might desire and strive to become so; we might say in reference to any particular purpose or act of his, "I will not murmur, I will try to be resigned to God's will; but O that His will were different from what it is;" and in that state of mind we might, perhaps, think we were reconciled to God. But far, very far should we be from it.

To illustrate this point: A child may know that his father has the power to enforce obedience to his commands, and may yield an outward submission to his authority, even while his heart is far from him, and while he wishes he could usurp the reins of government and have things in his own way. Now, it will not be pretended that that child is reconciled to his father's authority and government. So with man. Knowing that God reigns over the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and that none can stay His hand, he may say, "Well, I will be satisfied with the allotments of God's providence, because He will do all His pleasure, whether I am or not; but if I had the power to do my will, we should see a different state of things. I would turn away this affliction. I would escape from that bereavement and sorrow. I would dwell in perpetual sunshine and prosperity." But this man has not yet begun to taste the joys of reconciliation to God. He is still in the bitterness of unreconciliation; the bondage of error, fear, and doubt.

To be reconciled to God, he must realize that He is the Father of all spirits; that He loves all His children and watches over them with the tenderest solicitude; that He is seeking through the varied discipline of life, through the ministry of adversity, affliction, and bereavement, to develop and cultivate their higher nature, and train them up for a near and intimate communion with Himself. In one word, he must feel that every event that takes place in the universe, is for the best, as it is soon to result in good; and then he will be able to resign himself and all His interests into his Father's hands, and feel the peace and joy and reconciliation to His will. He can now say with the Master, "Not my will but Thine, O God, be done." He would not alter one of the Divine plans, if he had the power; for he knows that they could not be altered for the better. All the wishes and aspirations of his heart are fully satisfied. And a frame of mind somewhat like this is needed to enable a man to walk with God.

III. We must live a life of communion with God, become imitators of Him as dear children, and make His word the standard of our faith and practice. What is communion with God, and how may it be enjoyed? It is the direct intercourse of the spirit of man with the all-loving Father, to be enjoyed through the medium of sincere and earnest prayer.

O yes, when we steal awhile away from the bus-

tle and turmoil of the world, and the soul prostrates itself before its Maker and pours out its emotions and breathes its desires into the ear of the great Father, it is then given us to hold sweet and up-lifting communion with Him. It has been well said by the poet, that—

> "Prayer ardent opens Heaven, lets down a stream
> Of glory on the consecrated hour
> Of man, in audience with the Deity."

It is so By prayer, heartfelt prayer to God, we catch as it were the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and are lifted up towards heaven; our minds are abstracted from the frailties of earth, the vanities of time and sense, and drawn out in the contemplation of all that is amiable and lovely in the character of the Deity; and thus by devout meditation and spiritual communion with the Greatest of Beings, we are in some measure conformed to His moral likeness and made partakers of His spirit. And when we go out into the world and stand up amid its trials and temptations, with the impress of His goodness fresh upon our souls, still breathing an atmosphere of devotion, we cannot but receive sweet and sanctifying influences therefrom. We do not expect by our prayers to change Him who is without variableness or the shadow of turning; nor do we wish to do so. If we thought there was the least possibility of changing the mind and purposes of the Almighty by prayer, we should never dare attempt the service again. The goodness of God is

infinite and absolute; and, of course, if our prayers could effect any change in Him it could not be for the better, but must be in the opposite direction. We pray, then, not to alter God, but to benefit ourselves; not to draw Him away from his purposes, or to bend Him down to our frailties, but to lift ourselves up towards His perfections. By spiritual worship we feel more sensibly the love and presence of God; we are absorbed in the contemplation of His character and perfections. We feel within the soul a striving to become like God,—to be pure, just, and good, because He is, and because we can find happiness only in being like Him. O, if we could always live in this frame of mind, this blessed intercourse and communion with the unseen and spiritual, what a heavenly peace and joy would pervade our bosoms. We should then breathe the very atmosphere of heaven, and be changed into the divine image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

We must not only commence with the great Father, but we must take Him for our pattern, and seek to become imitators of Him as dear children. It should be the great object and end of our lives to transcribe the excellencies of the Divine character upon the tablet of our own souls; to love and do good to all as we have opportunity, that we may be adopted into the household of saints, walk with God, and become more and more like Him.

And we must, also, take the revealed word of God, as the man of our counsel, the standard of our

faith and practice. We must become familiar with its teachings, imbibe its spirit, treasure up its principles, its truths and promises, in our hearts, that we may become wise unto salvation, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

We have thus endeavored to show what is necessary to enable us to walk with God. We must believe in His existence and perfections; we must be agreed with Him and reconciled to all the allotments of His providence; we must live a life of communion with Him, endeavor to imitate His moral qualities, be guided and directed by the word of His truth. If we are thus prepared, we may, like Enoch, walk with God, and like him enjoy the blessings attendant upon such a course.

There is another truth of great importance indirectly inculcated in the text. It is that a true life is one of growth and progress, unfolding itself gradually in new beauty, blessedness and power; that it is indeed a perpetual ascent, as upon the heavenly ladder seen by the patriarch Jacob. The good man, the Christian, is a temple of the Holy Spirit. God dwells in him and he in God. He lives and walks with God in a holy companionship. Unsatisfied with present attainments, he cannot consent to stand still; his eye is fixed on perfection, and he walks towards it; he takes step after step in the path to holiness and heaven. Ever does he hear voices from on high, saying, "Come ye up hither." He struggles to divest himself of

all these weights that hold him down to earth; he seeks earnestly for more faith, spirituality, and love, that he may rise to higher spheres of thought, duty, and enjoyment. And, having taken a few steps in the right direction, he does not falter nor linger there; as soon as one is taken, another is ready for him. And forever it will be so. And in this way he truly walks with God.

But we must, in closing, make a few remarks upon the advantages to be derived from such a course. Enoch, by his unwavering faith, his rectitude of heart and life, his eminent piety and moral goodness, obtained the precious testimony that "he pleased God." And if we, my brethren, follow his example and walk with God, we shall of course have the satisfaction of knowing that we please Him, that His approving smiles rest upon us. And it seems impossible that any one can fail to perceive the rich reward which that man enjoys who walks with God. It is his privilege to breathe the pure air and live in the clear sunshine of God's presence and love. Nothing dark or gloomy can ever cast its sombre shadows over him. Brightness and beauty reign around him; quietness and peace, within him. Living above the world, or rising above its temptations and troubles, he makes all sorrow, toil, and pain subservient to his moral and spiritual growth. He may, as others do, meet with adverse fortune, suffer afflictions and bereavements; but even these

minister to his faith, patience, and moral goodness. Knowing that whom God loves He chastens, he hails even the chastenings of the Lord as an evidence of His interest in his welfare, and rests content in the assurance that, —

> "Afflictions from above,
> Are angels sent on embassies of love."

His trust is the ever-living Father, and come weal or come woe, come life or come death, his soul is serene and happy. Earthly comforts and earthly friends may be taken from him; but, instead of murmuring because of this, he thanks God that he was permitted to enjoy them so long, and praises His name for what are still left. He does not part with his friends when they are borne from the natural into the spiritual realm. They are with him still; nearer to him than before. Their presence is more real and purifying. If he cannot understand why God permits certain afflictions to overtake him, he gladly consents not to know. He trusts in Him and works by faith. He would not *know* anything if he could; for then he could not exercise trust or know its joys. He is thankful for every trial of his faith and love, and let what will come, he is triumphant.

In the strength of such unwavering trust, what toils are cheerfully endured; what sufferings are patiently borne; what deprivations are unmurmur-

ingly felt; and what a triumph is gained over the ills of life! As saith the Poet,

> "One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists — one only, — an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, however
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power,
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good."

But it is when man is nearing the goal of his earthly being, when his mortal body is about to return to the dust whence it came, that he most needs the support of God's presence, and the light and peace which spring from faith in Him, that he may be delivered from all fear of death and the grave. And if we have walked with God through life, happy and triumphant shall we be in the hour of death. It will then be given us to lean confidingly on the arm of the Father, and to feel that living or dying we are His. And as the natural vision grows dim and feeble, the spiritual will grow more acute and active. There will come to us bright visions of the immortal and the heavenly world; the music of angels, as they sweep their golden lyres, will be heard; and we shall long to join the shining band, that mortality may be swallowed up of life. Thus, to the Christian, death is but the beginning of a higher, an angelic

life; but a translation to the land of the beautiful and the blest. To him,—

"The pall and the shroud no longer wear gloom,
They are travelling robes to a fairer home,
Where hearts that were linked by an earthly love,
Shall meet to inherit the kingdom above."

O happy indeed is the lot of the Christian, the man who walks with God during his whole sojourn here on earth. In life he enjoys the infinite Father's protection and love, and is blessed with the unsearchable riches of Christ. In death he is not alone, but is surrounded by guardian angels who wait to receive and welcome him home; who will fold him in their embraces and lead him to heaven. And without a doubt or a fear, he passes away to the spirit-land, where faith shall be lost in sight, and hope swallowed up in fruition.

I have thus endeavored to show you, my friends, how you may walk with God, and the unspeakable benefits you will derive from such a course. And, I pray you, reflect seriously upon this subject. Think how sublime a thing it is to be a Christian; and O think of the blessedness and joy of the Christian life, the peace and triumph of his death; and come to your heavenly Father, walk with Him in the confidence and joy of a holy intimacy, and the Christian's happy lot shall be yours.

"The spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that

is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." AMEN.

*LET US PRAY.

ALMIGHTY GOD: We bow humbly at Thine altar, once more to crave Thy blessing. Sanctify to us this hour of worship. Move our hearts with gratitude in consideration of the fulness of Thy grace. Lift us into holy and perpetual communion with Thee. Help us to experience the blessedness of a continued "walk with God." Keep us in Thy love, in our homes, in our enterprises, in the great world. And may our end be peace. AMEN.

METHOD OF SALVATION.

BY REV. C. H. LEONARD. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ACTS XVI.

What must I do to be saved. — ACTS XVI. 30.

YOU have many things to do in order to be saved. Some things are to be forsaken and others are to be sought. Some things must be given up and others must be taken up. What are we to give up? Everything wrong. What are we to seek and take up into the essential life? Everything right and good. I do not think we can state this better. Here is the whole duty. All the wrong we have thought, felt, done, is to be repented of.

This is one thing we are to do. We are to *repent.* Extempore grief that we are no wiser, no purer, no greater, is not enough. Sorrow that we are living too low a life, absorbed with trifles, is not enough. Such beginnings, such moods must become permanent. They must lead to the resolute saying, "Get thee hence." Repentance is not sorrow for sin. It is a sorrow for sin that leads to conduct. It is something for the whole life, and not for a moment of danger, or trial, or a death-

bed. Repentance does not stand and weep over failures and misdeeds. It reforms. It sets about doing something. It forsakes wrong and seeks right. It arms itself for conflict. There is a victory to be gained. It is the victory over self. There is a surrender to be made. It is the surrender of the lowest to the highest in the nature. And, as the first word of the practical Gospel is, Reform, so the first step in a good life is, Repentance. Generally speaking, every one must *begin* the work of salvation, or new creation, by forsaking some sin — by putting off some clog that hangs on the best faculties. The honest question will be, "What am I given up to?" "In what that is wrong do I live?" "Upon what do I act?" "What am I given up to that it were well to be rid of?" This will be dealing with the real problem, and can but lead the way to its solution.

But this forsaking of wrong, even the entire emancipation of the soul from it, is but a part of the work we have to do. After *change* must come *growth*. After some things are put off, others must be put on. After vices are rooted up, virtues must be planted. This is the order. It is not meant by this, however, that, in a direct and positive way, a man must set to work with his faults, and, dealing with his sins *exclusively*, put them all away, leaving the soul free from every taint of wrong; and then commence a second work — the work of improvement and cultivation. One might do this if it were a physical poison we wanted to wash out.

But the soul cannot be cleansed like cloth. All through life, there is the alternation of change and growth, putting off and putting on, forsaking and seeking. Sometimes the forsaken wrong, or the "dead self" will become "a stepping stone to higher things." Sometimes, too, the new interest of the best faculties in a noble object, will make them forget lower pursuits; and sometimes, again, the real and wretched state of the mind, its starving state, will be understood, deeply felt, by the sudden light of a *better* state that is possible, and the unexpected taste of that food which is Life. Just as darkness is driven out by the introduction of light, so, often is the demon expelled by the advent of the angel. The controversy, however, is constant. The constant growth implying a constant change; the constant change, a constant growth; the one preparing the way for the other, and, quite as frequently, perhaps, the other opening the way and widening the prospects. The rundles of the ladder that rests on the earth and leans against the sky, should be named, alternately, change and growth, growth and change; and the top-most steps may be change, — and the new birth into truth and faith and love in the upward way along the line of the Future, will accept this name and rejoice in it. For the human soul will never be too good to change. Its growth implies a laying aside of some outside, so that the more vital being can find truer expression; and that which is

itself fed from the source of life, that into which life always pours, can never cease to grow.

But let us see if we cannot get a little nearer the question of the text. We have tried to answer it in a general manner: let us approach it once more for the instruction and comfort of those persons who would know precisely what they are to do in order to be saved. You ask: "What am I to do in order to reach that state of mind and heart denominated Christian? Christian character, religious life! That is what you desire. How attain it? I will try to answer very frankly and very plainly. You want to be saved; that is, allow me to repeat again and again, you want to be lifted out of sensualism, thoughtlessness, selfishness, and everything that degrades you and is unworthy of you, into spirituality and thought, ingenuousness and a life of increasing excellence. You want to be Christians — truly and entirely religious. What shall we do? Now may I say, that, before we can commence *any* work with the promise of success, we must have some *idea* to work on? In the mind of the worker, there must be some idea of the thing to be done. So with us in regard to the matter that is before us now. Before we can commence our work even — before we can begin to put forth endeavors after the Christian life, we want some *idea* of the life itself. This, I suppose, is clear. You can illustrate it by referring to many things in common life. It is enough, I think, to

state the truth, that to work successfully in anything, an idea of what is to be done is a pre-requisite.

What idea have we of the Christian life? What kind of a life is it? It is variously spoken of in the New Testament. You are familiar with the phrases that refer to it. It is called "Christ's life," "Christ in us," "Righteousness," "Eternal life," "Kingdom of God within," "Faith." And every word that is used to describe this "life," represents it as *inward* — a life *in* the soul — a reign within that leads to all right conduct without,—and a sentiment that *works* by love. The Christian soul is one that is so filled with the love of heaven — so completely toned by it, that the practice in the daily life has the uniformity of Christian practice. We shall not get far out of the way, then, if we call the Christian life, a life of *entire Truth.* I mean truth in everything; in thought, in feeling, in faith, in hope, in love, in conduct. *True* is a great word and expresses more than men generally put into it. Rather, there is more in it and under it than most of us are good enough to see. In the comprehensive sense the *true* soul is the Christian soul — the one that is more than correct, more than right before the world, even saintly before God.

With this *idea*, then, of the result we would reach, how are we to begin, and what, all along the way, are we to take up? My own feeling is, if we came to this question as the newest one of

the world, with no pre-conceived notions, we should all ask — Has anybody *lived* this good life of the faculties, purely, entirely? If so, then, at once, from all other methods, we should turn to study the method of that life. To become acquainted with the ideal and embodiment of the Christian life would seem to be our first duty. Now, how simple and easy this is. The first thing you are to do is to study the history of Christ's life. The first step in a Christian life is to become acquainted with the life Christ lived on the earth. You are to be perplexed with no nice question about his rank, nature, mission. You are simply to study his biography.

Nominally, there are four histories of Jesus. Really, however, the four Gospels form but one history, or the history of but one life. Each narrative is a contribution, and helps complete the story. In one, you get one phase of the great life; in another, another phase; a third supplies a feature; and a fourth is needful to complete the picture. From all, you get the finished and perfect portrait. You need them all, and you need to study them all, in order to become acquainted with him who was the perfect possessor of the Divine life.

Too frequently, I know, words, phrases, texts, scenes, opinions, traditions, are studied. The *primary* study is the study of the outward history of Jesus Christ. Other studies will come in their order and in good time. This one is rudimental.

In the *nature* of things this is first. Without it, there is no Christianity in fact; that is, no *embodied, instituted* religion.

May I repeat then, that, first of all, you will study the artless narrative of the New Testament, the history of the life which most clearly shows us what it is *to be a Christian.* Just as you would read the biography of Washington, of Channing, of Ballou, to see how it was ordered, so will you read the biography of this greatest of all persons our earth has known.

Consider that this study will include many things; and, in many respects, perhaps, will differ from the study of every other historic character. This difference is a difference of degree. Hence the study of the truest disciples of Jesus — those who have lived in all centuries since he taught the twelve — the study of all noble and excellent character, will help to take you up to him who is the head of all, and the one eminent spirit in the moral landscape of the world, — the one to which all other souls, from different stations, planes, and degrees of life, look forward. . . . . When, then, you have found out what is said of Jesus, consider next what *he said* himself. First, you will be introduced to new *condition* of existence and to a new person. Now, you will be shown a new *world.* You will discover that this new Teacher is not a novelty because he is one more added to the list — nor yet new because he adopts a new phraseology, but because there is new power

in what he utters. Grant that he speaks of familiar things. Grant — what we need not do — that he made no new statement. The characteristic that absorbs us, is, that here is a new spirit making old things new, and investing the worn-out terms of Judaism with fresh beauty, and filling them with spirit and life. The message he brings is a very simple one. On his soul is the burden of a great truth which man everywhere sighs for. But it is uttered in no continuous discourses; and there is the absence of all method in his preaching. Here and there, in the street, in the houses of his friends, in the fishing-boat, on the mountain, words of wonderful import are dropped; and every common incident in common life is turned into an occasion for man's good and the Father's glory; and men are instructed, helped, inspired — they scarce know how. One thing only they know; they *see* better.

You cannot, dear friends, study these words of Jesus as you would a philosophical treatise, or a work on logic, or a book of inductive science. Nothing is here *followed out.* This is the fact which makes this Christian study so profound. The teaching of Christ is direct, positive. Much is left for each learner to work out in himself.

Let me, in this connection, then, urge you to study the words of Jesus with reference to what he said of himself, the work he came to do, the majesty of *duty*, the worth of human nature, the supremacy of the soul, and the character of God.

Men have disputed long about these things, and will continue to do so, until all consent to consult Christ's own words, and, above all, Christ's own life. You cannot remain in doubt on the great essentials of a good life, the meaning of the Gospel, the evident intent of Christianity, and the purpose of God through Christ, if, with a prayerful heart and unspoiled mind, you read the words of the Master himself.

As the next step in your Christian study, consider what Christ *did*. The conduct of Jesus was the expression of his spirit. It is not always so. Deeds are not always the sign of the inward temper. Some acts that have the semblance of nobility are not noble, because they lack the inspiration of noble motive. But the sincere man will put *himself* into what he does. In the long run, an insincere man will show *himself* through all disguises. Occasionally, however, he may deceive and pass for more than he is. Now, as we were saying, in the life of Jesus there was nothing of this. He was Truth and Goodness, and when he acted, the deed was but the appropriate clothing, the foliage and blossoming of the Truth and Love that he *was*. All his conduct was regal and sublime, because his will was to do the will of Him who sent him. He said — "My conduct testifies of me." "Believe me for the *works*' sake." The correspondence between his teaching and his doing was perfect. One was his life in deeds; the other,

his life in words. Both were the expression alike of his soul. If you will study, then, the *conduct* of Jesus, you will find it in harmony with what he taught. It will illustrate what he taught. His life of deeds was but his life in thought and love working outwardly.

In the commencement of your study you will become acquainted with the precepts, the new morality of the Christian Religion. The precepts of Christ are great in themselves. But you will not know their full power till you become acquainted with the conduct of their author. I hope you understand me. But suppose, in order to fetch this home, you had all the precepts copied out of the New Testament, and you were to read them, if that were possible, without any thought of Jesus himself. I grant they are very elevated precepts then. But now trace his steps; follow him from Bethlehem to Calvary, and see how he *lives* these precepts. Why, they become as *new* to you when you thus connect them with him. He said, "Love your enemies." But how little we know of the power of this precept, until we weep with him over Jerusalem, and hear his prayer from the cross. He enjoined self-denial. But how little we know of this until we see him, the homeless one, giving up comforts, nay, never knowing them, and dying at last for the good of others. He instructs us in the duty of benevolence. His are the wisest precepts on the duty of loving our neighbors. But we learn the duty from his conduct as no words can

teach us. The essence of his commands is, "Love to God and love to man." But my piety and yours "might become extravagance and enthusiasm had we not the perfect example of trust and calm devotion in the life of Jesus.

The same may be said of the *doctrines* of Jesus. They are all bound up with *him*. I will take but one to illustrate. The doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount, *God's universal care*. God's care for the bad, as well as for the good — sending His *rain*, and His *spirit* equally upon all. Now the world teaches this doctrine. The sun and the shower teach it. The Bible teaches it in the most touching language. But, my brethren, when we learn to walk with Christ; when we see how *he* cared for the poor and the fallen; when we see him sit with sinners, inviting the vilest to come to him as a *friend*, and suffering the woman whose touch was deemed pollution, to wash his feet with her tears; when, all along the way we hear him calling the lonely, the outcast, "I am come to such as you," — we have a conviction of the grace and goodness of God such as no abstract teaching could ever convey.

I am aware that, in what has just been said, the next step we are to take, is hinted. For we are not only to consider what is said *of* Jesus and *by* him, and the *conduct* he manifested; we must consider his *character* — what he *was* and *is*. His history, his words, his deeds, we are to know; we are also to know *him*. When we know *him* we shall know

his *religion*. He is his religion. He came to *be* it. To me — is it not to you? — this is the most interesting disclosure of all. *Christ is Christianity*. His history, precepts, greatest sayings, greatest conduct, lead to him. *He* is the Truth and the Life. The greatest power — redeeming power — in this world is the power of Christ's *character*. There is no other character under heaven whereby we are saved. This has power to cleanse us; heal and cure us wholly; save our souls and quicken them into the ever-growing life of Heaven.

But this character of Christ must be brought near as an existing reality. You must put yourself in the line of its attraction and influence. You will know but little of it unless you open your heart to it. Try to get near to Jesus. Feel that you can meet him daily; in the duty and care of every hour. No moment need be bereaved of his influence. Especially should you meet him in the way which he hath appointed; in the commemoration of his love at the table which he spreads; in prayer through his name; and, best of all, in the character of an humble, teachable disciple at the Lord's feet.

After all this what will rise up before us? I answer: the greatness of a Soul — a character which belongs to no mere *condition*, but is great in spirit and in calm, sublime consecration. Move forward to that attraction, my friend, and you will *be saved*. It is influence from that, which will fill and

encircle you. The more you seek to become acquainted with Christ in the manner pointed out, the more you strive to embody and express in your thought, affection, and conduct, the full, rich life of Jesus in its relations to God and the world, the purer and more vigorous will your minds become, and the deeper and fairer your heart. And this *deepness*, *richness*, and *purity* constitute the salvation you seek; and when once found, or rather when the soul attains to the freedom of truth, the question, "What must I *do* to be saved?" will no longer be an arbitrary one, and the answer to it will no longer be doubtful. The *Life* will be the question; and the *Life* will be the answer.

LET US PRAY.

O God, our Heavenly Father:—Through intimacy of faith and love may we be brought near to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. May he become the true and living way for our souls. May his words be very precious to our hearts; and may we study them, that so we may attain to his spirit of life. May we strive in his name, and duly walk as his disciples till Thou dost take us home. AMEN.

CHRIST FAULTLESS.

BY REV. I. C. KNOWLTON. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ISA. XLII.

I find no fault in this man. — LUKE XXIII. 4.

THIS was the testimony of Pontius Pilate. After conversing with Jesus and considering all the facts in the case, the Roman Governor was constrained to say, "I find no fault in this man." In this discourse, by leading the hearer to a similar conclusion, I hope to induce a more profound respect both for Christ and Christianity.

Man is imitative. He shapes himself and his work by patterns and examples. Unconsciously he becomes like what he lovingly contemplates. To improve their taste and thus qualify them for their respective vocations, artists study fine paintings and statuary, and the scholar reads the Classics. Of a house or ship, there is first the idea, then the draft or model, and lastly the combination of various materials into the desired structure, according to the idea and model. God has the perfect idea of human life and society in its fully developed state. Jesus is the incarnation of the

Divine idea — the perfect model man. He is our pattern and example. By studying and imitating him, we learn what we may be, and become what we should be, — "fashioned like his glorious body." Let us begin at the beginning. .

His birth was unexceptionable. In order to be competent and qualified to sympathize with the great mass of mankind, Jesus, like most persons, was born and lived in the humblest rank of society. His birth was severely rustic. He was born in a manger. But heaven's choir serenaded his advent to earth, a new star was lighted to glitter on his cradle, and the Eastern Magi did homage to the infant and presented rich gifts to his mother. He came as a peasant and was saluted as a prince. Humility and grandeur combined, made the scene faultless.

We know very little of his early history; but to know more is not necessary. His Gospel is not based on the circumstances of his early life, but on eternal principles. If a man speaks wisely and acts nobly, where and how he was educated is of little consequence. Truth is not made more or less valuable by the organ through which it is uttered. Very interesting, however, must have been the early life of Jesus as "he grew in stature and in favor with God and man." Once only, at the age of twelve, he comes out for a brief hour into the light of history, gravely and wisely conversing in the Temple with the greatest men of his nation. For the rest, it is probable he faith-

fully served and obeyed his parents, working assiduously with his father, until the thirtieth year of his age. Thus he complied with the customs of his times. His toil-hardened hand has sanctified manual labor and made it honorable. Remembering his noble example, how patiently and faithfully should we perform our respective tasks! How many pleasant scenes, happy seasons, kind actions, and holy hours of communion gladdened these thirty eventful years! What a noble son, brother, playmate, friend, and fellow-laborer, he must have been! What a light, love, peace, and prosperity, there must have been at Joseph and Mary's house! We can easily conjecture how frequently and emphatically his happy parents exclaimed, "We find no fault in Jesus."

It has been demonstrated by figures and statistics, that if every person worked six hours in a day till the age of thirty, all the necessary labor of the world would be done. Jesus, therefore, having completed more than his full share of manual toil, commenced at that age his public career as a teacher and reformer. Thenceforward, we have his biography in the four Gospels, and faultless, indeed, was his great, good life and noble works.

Jesus was a handsome man,—good looking, well proportioned, dignified in manner, quick in perception, pleasant in speech, and manly in every respect. He must have been all this; for the pure angelic soul that vitalized and illumined his

body, would have beautified the face of deformity, and made lovable the most homely human form. Sculptors and painters have failed, in their best efforts, to represent him sufficiently noble and manly. He obeyed every physical law, and such obedience is sure to develop beauty. He was healthy, and the healthy are always handsome. Had he been a fortune-hunter, he might have gained his ends by his goodly appearance His gentlemanly deportment and profound wisdom might have won for him the highest station in his country and the greatest honor among his people. But he sought neither station nor fame on the earth.

In fact, he was humble and unassuming. "He went about doing good," on foot and not richly apparelled. His sole pride was faithfully to perform his mission. Twelve poor unlettered men formed his train, whose feet he once washed to teach them that the humblest service was honorable when done from a good motive. "The common people heard him gladly;" for he spake to them kindly, encouragingly, and hopefully. Even the beggar, the leper, and the degraded were graciously noticed; and he talked to them in a voice as low, sweet, tender, and musical as a mother's. He did "not strive, nor cry" aloud in angry contention. He was not odd nor eccentric; though he had a wonderful way of making the masses love him. Like us, he loved and sought the genial, the social, the pleasant. On a verdant and sunny hill-side looking out on a goodly prospect,

or in a quiet and affectionate family like that of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, or in the sanctified courts of the gorgeous Temple, he loved to sit and talk of the holy, the beautiful, the pure, and the heavenly. He treated woman with deference and tenderness; and was fond of children, occasionally taking them in his arms and blessing them. He was a pleasant guest at a wedding, and was fond of ripe figs. His discourses were instructive and pointed, illustrated by easy parables and allusions to familiar objects, such as birds, flowers, vines, salt, light, and domestic utensils. In fine, so affable, affectionate, wise, and sympathizing was he, that no unprejudiced mind found any fault in him.

Yet Jesus was an earnest, active, fearless man. Teaching, praying, arguing, healing the sick, and journeying occupied his whole time. He was not idle for a moment. As fast as possible he did all he could in one place, and then immediately went to another. He was continually busy, and worked with an energy that could remove mountainous difficulties. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, strength to the feeble, and hope to the despairing. He fed hungry multitudes, calmed tempests, cast out devils, and raised the dead. Disregarding trifles and useless matters, the full salvation of all mankind he sought with tireless perseverance. This was his mission; and to attain its accomplishment, false old theories were attacked and torn to shreds, the vain traditions of the fathers were trampled

under foot, and the fiercest opposition calmly braved. Even the black shadow of that ignominious crucifixion which he distinctly saw approaching, did not deter the faultless Hero for one moment from his great purpose.

He lived a true, noble, manly life, until the thirty-third year of his age, when he was apprehended without just cause, hurried through an unfair trial, condemned without a crime, and maliciously executed. His last thoughts were of his mother, his Father in heaven, and the forgiveness of his enemies. He gave up the ghost without fear or murmuring; and when his great heart ceased to beat, the earth trembled with affright, the sun grew blind with grief, and the amazed people cried out, "Surely this was a righteous man." In the eloquent words of Rousseau, "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God."

During his whole life, there was not one instance in which wisdom and goodness required him to speak or do more or less than he did; not one occasion wherein an improper spirit was manifested, a duty neglected, or a sin committed. Portions of the Bible have been derided, the miracles have been discredited, God and immortality disbelieved in; but the life of Christ has been universally admired. The most daring scoffer has never tried to impeach that. Criticism adds to its lustre. Men of all nations, times, and persuasions

concur in the opinion that he was without fault, a perfect model man.

While reading the accounts given of him by the Evangelists, an unusual gravity pervades our hearts. The New Testament commands and compels its readers to be serious and prayerful. In every chapter of the four Gospels, Jesus is the central and most prominent figure. In every scene we forget everything but him and his divine manner. Scribes, pharisees, priests, rabbis, and centurions sink into insignificance. You cannot help commending his code of ethics, though it rebukes and condemns yourself. You forget his persecutors, in admiring his serenity. You would be perplexed by his miracles, did you not feel that the kingdom of God has come. As you read his holy, loving words, you catch his spirit and long to be transformed into his likeness.

The titles of his office are appropriate, significant, and agreeable. Every epithet suggesting honor, worth, ability, and goodness, is rightfully lavished upon Jesus. He is the eloquent Advocate for us and our interests, the Author and finisher of our faith, the able Counsellor for those needing advice, the Friend of sinners, the innocent Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, the moral and spiritual Life of the human race, the true Light that lighteth ever man that cometh into the world, the good Physician for the body or the mind, the Prince of peace, the well beloved Son, the Saviour of all men, the Meditator between God

and men, the Ransom for all, the Teacher sent from God, the Way and Door to perfection here and heaven hereafter. He was all these and much more. Commissioned to do all that can be done for man's welfare, and thoroughly furnished and qualified for every good word and work, he is a very present help in every time of need. Whoever looks unto him for light, guidance, and assistance, will be satisfied and saved.

His moral precepts are equally faultless. The "Sermon on the Mount" is the concentration of all the good sermons and maxims ever delivered. The ethics of the philosophers and sages of all times and countries do not excel that sublime yet simple code in one solitary instance. This royal law, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," is the very essence of justice, equality, and fraternity. It is the fountain and base of all common law. We might repeal all our legislative enactments, erase from memory the long, dull, contradictory catalogue of legal precedents, conduct the judiciary department of our government by this "golden rule," and greatly profit by the exchange. This condensation of all moral principles teaches men to respect the will of the majority, seek to promote the welfare of our friends, do good to our enemies, forgive those who injure us, render to every man his due, visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. Is any other law needed? Are not Christ's pre-

cepts faultless? The easy yoke of his requirements can be borne by a free man without narrowing the area of his freedom; for it is a perfect law of liberty.

Christianity has a word of advice for every man, and for man in every situation. Its precepts are generalizations of all particulars. Thus, "Pray without ceasing; I exhort that prayers be made for all men; ask in faith; and let thy will be done." This is prayer enough. No specifications are needed. "Worship God; in everything give thanks; let your light shine; work while the day lasts; love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and all thy heart and all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." Obedience to these injunctions embraces all duties. No particular forms and ceremonies are requisite, and no mistakes about practical religion can easily be made. If all men conformed to these requirements, though no altars or temples existed, the kingdom of God would come and earth be changed to heaven.

And, further, the moral precepts of the Gospel are direct, personal, and unmistakable. We cannot escape them or fritter them away by sophistry. They do not yield an atom to gratify man's desire or to accommodate his policy. Diamond like, they resist all solvents, cut the smoothest expediency, and glow with a brilliancy which time cannot tarnish. The attentive reader of the New Testament knows when he sins and when he does right as surely as he knows when he eats or drinks. Not

only the outward conduct but the inward feeling and intention, the law of Christ would regulate. "Think no evil," and be pure *in heart*, are searching commands that cannot be evaded. True, the revengeful may denounce the Christian's non-resistance by brute force, the ambitious tyrant may scorn humility, and the avaricious may prize earthly treasures more than heavenly; but all the wise and good concur in opinion with Jesus. Make the inner man righteous and the outer would not be unrighteous. Jesus preached the sentiments of his own soul. Of course, he practiced what he preached; and therefore Pilate was forced to say, "I find no fault in him." If a few imitated his example, they too might be crucified; but if all men were Christians, oppression, war, slavery, and crime would cease, and the human race become a happy, loving brotherhood.

The miracles wrought by Jesus, excepting the blasting of the fruitless fig tree, (and all fruitless things ought to wither,) are perfect gems of goodness. While they demonstrate the power, they also illustrate the kind providence of the God who is love. He cured the sick; restored the wandering reason to its throne; gave strength to palsied limbs; cleansed the foul and lonely leper of his otherwise incurable disease; multiplied bread to feed the fainting people; walked on the water and hushed the raging storm to save his disciples from drowning; gave the great blessing of sight and hearing to the blind and deaf; raised from the

dead the poor widow's only son; called back to life and love the lost brother; and, by his own resurrection, proved man immortal. What better or greater miracles could be wrought? Just the ones that needed them most,—the poor, sick, wretched, and degraded, were the principal recipients of his miraculous blessings. Just as we would have it, the hopeless and incurable cases received the especial benefit of his attention. In and by all these wonderful works, he shewed that God was good as well as great,—the Father as well as the Ruler of the human race. We would not desire him to do more, less, or differently. His works attest his divine character and mission by their number, their goodness, and their power. All was faultless.

The grandeur and mercy of his mission, the means employed for its accomplishment, and the certainty of its ultimate perfect completion, are alike noble and gratifying. The more we contemplate, the more we admire.

Being sent by the Almighty and fully qualified for the business to be done, when he came he did not plead custom and precedent, nor ask the priviledge of preaching truth and doing good. He arose in the plenitude of manly majesty, and introduced himself, "by the grace of God" earth's Saviour. He had a verbal precept from the Lord to serve on the human race; and had he needed assistance, he could have summoned all the angels of heaven as a *posse comitatus*. That precept was greater than *habeas corpus*. It empowered him to

take the body, soul, and spirit of every man, and purify and bless them. "By authority," he proclaimed "glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." He did what he pleased and all he pleased, for there was none that could hinder; and at last voluntarily laid down his life to complete his work. Son of God and Son of Man, if the world will not listen to and obey him, he is not blamable. But he provided for that contingency, and will ultimately draw all men to himself to bless them forever.

He came for that very purpose; although man's ignorance, wickedness, and weakness were fully known to him. John says, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world,"—of the sinful, stubborn, blinded, degraded, world. That alone needed salvation. Jesus said, "The Father hath given all things into the hands of the Son;" a gift including people of every nation, character, and condition. Again he said, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me." Willing or unwilling, they must come and bow the knee to the Redeemer. And further, "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." The angel informed Joseph that Jesus "shall save his people from their sins." His people are sinners, — all sinners are his people; and these he will save from their sins. That is just what the poor sinners need; and when that is done, they will be fit for heaven. Sin "brought death into the world, and all our woe;" and salvation from sin is "Paradise regained."

The beloved Disciple testifies that "Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." With all this we can find no fault. Neither the mission of Christ, nor the Biblical description of it, *could* be better or more worthy our heavenly Father.

To accomplish this great and glorious undertaking, Jesus did all he could, and all that was necessary to be done. He spake more eloquently and wisely than ever man before, set the purest and noblest examples, manifested the most affectionate spirit, performed the most wonderful works, and finally "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Paul says, "We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Could he do more, or man ask for more? John affirms that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." This is sufficient. Language cannot be more explicit. No design could be broader or better; no attempt more lofty; and no sacrifice more heroic. Both the Redeemer and the plan of redemption are absolutely faultless.

The means by which the great salvation is to be wrought, are equally agreeable and satisfactory. Man does not like to be threatened and driven by the cold hand of power; and Jesus loosened the iron bands of the Mosaic law, and hushed to silence the thunders of Mount Sinai. Men do not like to be sorted out into classes, and made

to dress and drill exactly by arbitrary rules; and hence the rigid forms and numerous ceremonies of the old covenant were abrogated. Men want a hope and a confidence to cheer and support them as they try to "go up higher;" and Jesus told them of a heavenly home, where they might eventually find rest and happiness; and of a Father there whom they might love, pray to, and worship acceptably, anywhere and at any time, in spirit and in truth. He taught that a loving heart was a better offering than a lamb; that sincere desire was the only true prayer; and that doing good to man was equivalent to worshipping God. Archimedes thought he could move the world if he could procure a suitable lever and a place to use it. Jesus found that lever to be truth, its fulcrum the human soul, and the motive power unchanging love. That lever he put in operation; and though it works slowly, it will eventually lift the world up to heaven. Truth uttered kindly, goodness pleading for right, can do and is doing the great work; — leading men to repentance, exploding the heathenish idea of caste and classes among men, refining the rough and harsh manners of society, softening or repealing barbarous laws and framing new ones on a broader and more generous basis, elevating and invigorating the higher faculties of the intellect, and drawing men gently but mightily upward and onward. No reformation is needed, no progress is desirable, no salvation valuable, that truth and love cannot bring about. They can

wash away impurity, incite generous labor, bend the knee in prayer and lift the soul in worship. Truth makes free, "and he that loveth is born of God." Other means might do something; but these, all. They accord with man's best wishes, and do the needed work. There is no fault in them.

There is one more consideration. The "Captain of our salvation" is eminently well qualified for his task; the campaign against iniquity is well planned; the means and instrumentalities for carrying on the work are excellent. Will Jesus gain the victory? Will all men eventually be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth? Our final decision concerning Jesus depends on the answer to these questions. If any considerable portion of the human family shall forever continue to be ignorant, wicked, and wretched, in spite of the efforts of Jesus to save them, we must hesitate about calling him faultless. He does not quite come up to our desires and expectations. We wanted wrong annihilated — eradicated from the universe. We hoped and supposed he would do what he was sent to do, — save the entire world. But we are not left to doubt and disappointment. Every prophetic eye that has looked into the future, has seen a far-off golden age for earth when righteousness, peace, and joy shall fill every heart, and brother shall not say to brother, "Know ye the Lord," for all shall know, love, and serve Him. Swords shall be beaten into plow-shares,

the lion and lamb shall dwell together in peace, and "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover ocean's bottom." Nor is this all. Love and truth operate in other worlds the same as here. The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed, and all souls be made alive in Christ. The refining and purifying process shall go on, till Jesus shall see the "travail of his soul and be satisfied" by the birth of all intelligent beings into the kingdom of God; till he shall have gathered home the last wanderer, and God be all in all. Then shall the ransomed universe exclaim, "We find no fault" in Jesus. "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever;" "for he hath done all things well." AMEN.

*LET US PRAY.

FATHER ALMIGHTY: Sanctify to us the lessons and the life of the faultless Christ. Give us, we pray Thee, a suitable appreciation of Thine infinite grace in the bestowment of Thy Son to be the Saviour of the world. Make his commandments authoritative in every soul.

Bless to our good this hour of worship; keep us in the ways of peace, till we come hither again; and at length receive us to Thine own presence forever. AMEN.

VIEWS OF THE BIBLE, GOD, AND CHRIST.

BY REV. T. B. THAYER. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ACTS XXVIII.

We desire to hear of Thee what Thou thinkest.—ACTS XXVIII. 22.

INFLUENCED by the hope of rectifying the erroneous impressions of some, and of furnishing correct information to all, respecting our faith and its tendencies, I propose to present a condensed statement of our views respecting the Bible and its interpretation, respecting God, and Christ, and his salvation.

I. THE BIBLE. We receive the *Bible* as the record of a divine Revelation; the New Testament especially concerning us as the last will of God to man. The voice of the Universal Father to His children, unfolding to them their duty and discipline in the present, and their destiny in the future. It is to us the final authority, the supreme Court of Appeals, to whose decisions, when once fairly given, we take no exceptions.

But we bring to the interpretation of the Bible the reason and common sense which God has

given us as a help and a means to all knowledge. We claim and exercise the Protestant right of individual judgment in ascertaining what the Bible teaches. We acknowledge no church infallibility or dictation.

It is not much to us either that wise and good men have thought they found certain doctrines and teachings in the Bible, and that for ages the mass of the church, so called, have believed them. Wise men have been mistaken before to day, and that on all subjects. Besides, we have the benefit of their wisdom and of our own too. The past and the present meet for our instruction; and we must make the most of to-day, as they did of yesterday. We have the same Bible; the same divine voice of prophets and teachers is sounding in our ears, and we can hear as well as they; and we must be free, and live by what we hear ourselves, as they did.

And we are not greatly troubled that in the interpretation of the word of God, the majority of Christians differ from us, and are against us. Our democracy is not radical enough to accept as the law of the universe, the senseless cry of "*Vox populi, vox Dei.*" The voice of the people is not always the voice of God, but often quite otherwise, the voice of the devil even. The majority is not infallible, any more than the Pope. The majority rule would have displaced Jehovah, and installed Vishnu or Jupiter Tonans on the throne of the universe. The majority crucified Christ, though he

only was right, and the whole Sanhedrin wrong. The majority rule, as the proof of doctrinal truth and a guide to the understanding of the Bible, would send us all back into the bosom of the Catholic church. It was the indignant protest of Luther against this pretension, which gave Protestantism its existence, and to you the right to be here to-day.

We are not much moved, then, by any idle cry of what this wise man has believed, or what this good man, or the church think they find in the Bible. Accepting this word of God as authority, and responsible for our study and right use of it to none this side of Heaven, we think for ourselves, and speak what we think. We are not bound by church dictionaries, or by the mere sound or seeming of words, but seek ever with sincere hearts to know what the words mean for us; and having found what we believe is the meaning of the truth, we pray God to help us to live it.

II. Of God. We believe in Him as the New Testament reveals him — that He is One, the Supreme Creator and Ruler, the Universal Parent and Benefactor. As the Source and Author of all perfection, glorious in power, wisdom, holiness, justice, truth, and love, we adore Him. As the Giver of all good unto man, as the Father of us all, loving us with an unalterable, never-failing affection, we love Him in return.

We worship Him not for the sake of a future

good, but for the good there is in the worship itself — for the present joy and blessedness of communion with the Infinitely pure and beautiful. We worship and obey, not to secure a heaven, but because a heaven is already secured to us in the eternal purpose of the Father. God is not good to us because we worship Him; but we worship Him because He is good. We praise Him for what He is, and what He does. We pray to Him not that He may conform to our will, but that we may conform to His.

As a parent we trust Him with the most unreserved confidence now and for all coming time. For, with the apostle we are persuaded that "neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor any other thing is able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He may do, He does, many things we cannot understand. He may bring upon us trials and sorrows, the purpose of which we are not wise enough to discover; but of this one thing we are assured, that He never inflicts or permits any pain for its own sake; that He suffers no evil that has not an element of good in it, which at last shall triumph, and reveal itself as the ultimate purpose of every act of God.

Believing this with a faith which no darkness can obscure, no calamity ever shake; with an affection which no sorrow can make to falter for a moment,—we repose in the wisdom and the love

of God with a peace passing knowledge, confident that living or dying we are His, and nothing can harm us.

We are deeply conscious of sin, and we know God is too wise and good a parent to suffer his children to do evil without restraint or correction. He will punish us for every wrong we do. If need be, through the furnace of fire He will pass us, that the pure gold of the spirit may be separated from the earthly dross, and made ready to be stamped anew with His divine image and superscription.

We do not ask Him to deliver us from what is just, for this is best for us. It is more needful to us that we should bear the punishment, than to God that He should inflict it. In all that the Father brings upon us, however much we suffer, we are the gainers. What He sees is right and necessary, that we would not put away — and we ask not how much, nor when, nor where, in this world or in another. It is enough that God is our Father! This is an answer to every question we can ask or think.

In the fulness of this childlike trust we say evermore, — Father, take us; do with us as Thou wilt. If we are sick heal us. Even though the draught be bitter, we will not refuse it from Thy hand. If we have sinned, chasten us in Thy wisdom and Thy mercy. If it must be so, let the floods of judgment burst upon us — only, dear Father, while struggling in the dark waters, when we look up let

us see Thy pitying face bending over us in solicitous love; and over the heaving billows and through the drifting spray and mist, let us catch here and there a glimpse of the green and sunny shores beyond — and it is enough; we will not murmur, and we shall not faint in the struggle.

And that this is the issue of all, that God in His punishments as in his blessings is the same affectionate and gracious Parent, we have the beautiful witness of the apostle; — "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. We have had fathers of the flesh who chastened us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chasten us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nev rtheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

III. Of Christ. We believe in Jesus Christ as he is presented to us in the Gospel — as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. We believe in him as the express moral Image of the divine Father, and the especial Representative of His love to man. We believe in him as chosen of Heaven for the great work of human redemption, and to this end exalted above prophets and angels, and endowed above all others with a larger mea-

sure of the spirit, and wisdom, and power of God; through which he wrought his miracles, rose from the dead, and ascended on high.

In speaking of Christ as a Saviour, I am necessarily led to speak of the kind of salvation he came to effect. In doing this I shall not argue the question, nor enter upon a scriptural defence of the view presented; my object being to state our views in the simplest form, and leave the illustration and argument for other occasions.

The gospel, as we read it, reveals a spiritual salvation; that is, a salvation wrought within the soul, having no reference to any foreign or outward deliverance. It is not an escape from hell in the vulgar, church sense of the word, from flames and devils, or from torments or punishment of any sort; but from the cause of which punishment is but an effect — from sin, from lust and sensual bondage; from ignorance, mental and moral blindness, from hardness of heart and unbelief, from falsehood and error. These are the evils from which Christ saves us, the enemies of human virtue and happiness over which he will finally triumph through the power given him of God, and lead every soul into the joy of the great redemption.

The salvation which Christ procures for the world is, therefore, an infusion into the soul, of truth, knowledge, freedom, love, and a new spiritual energy and life — in a word, the re-birth, the new birth of the soul into righteousness and heavenly dispositions and desires. This is salvation as

taught and wrought out by the Lamb of God, the great Restorer. It is an inward moral and spiritual redemption, effected by faith and the knowledge of the truth, accompanied with the ever-helping grace of God, or the influences of the holy spirit.

And this work of deliverance or salvation, both in process and result, is not restricted to any time or place. It is not bounded by the limits of earth or of this life. Death does not hinder it, nor interfere with it. The saving power of Christ will continue till the glorious work is completed; and he does not surrender up his kingdom till *after the Resurrection*, and the destruction of every opposing and evil influence, of every enemy of man, even to the last which is death.—(1 Cor. xv.) Then all things being subdued unto the Father, the Son himself is subject also to Him that put all things under him, and God forever more is all in all!

This great truth, embracing both the nature and extent of Christ's salvation, seems to us the central light and glory of the Gospel. Take out this spiritual idea, this sublime consummation of the Saviour's mission, and Christianity as a divine and universal religion, becomes dim beyond expression. It is shorn of its splendor, and robbed of its worth and greatness to an extent scarcely capable of precise statement. It would be like stealing its warmth from the sun, or the colors from the rainbow. The beauty of the one, and the life-supporting energy of the other, perish in the same hour.

Here for the present I close the dogmatic statement, having done as much perhaps as the time will allow in a single discourse.

From what has been presented you will see what value we put on the Bible. It is to us the word of God; the record of His last will and testament to the world. It is the chart by which we make the voyage of life. It is the light-house standing at the entrance of the straits of Death, shedding down its cheerful and guiding rays upon the dark waters, and showing the way out into the great ocean of eternity, the glorious sea whose waters forever play and sparkle in the sunbeams of Infinite Love.

God is the Ruler, the Father of us all. We worship Him as the Only Perfect One; we love Him and trust Him equally in joy and sorrow, in rewards and punishments, in life and in death, here and hereafter; serenely confident He loves us, and whatever He does to us or with us, that will be the best for us.

Christ is the Son of God, the elder brother, the first born of the family, sent to be to us and to all a spiritual Deliverer; a Saviour who shall at last gather every wanderer into the fold of peace, and fulfill with glory to God and joy to the world, the olden prophecies of a golden age, a Universal Restoration!

And now permit me to urge these views upon your attention and study. The truth of them equally involves the good of man, and the glory

of God. Witnesses for them rise up in the very instincts, in the best and noblest affections of the heart; and all nature responds.

The harmony and the beauty of the heavens, the beneficent fertility of the earth, the solemn splendor and countless utilities of the sea; the various adornment and bounty of grove and forest; the melody of bird and brook, of wind and tree; the bright and busy day, the serene refreshing night; the buds and blossoms of spring, the sleep of winter; the caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly; the perpetual resurrections, renovations, and growths of nature, — all these are eloquent testimonies to the truth I have set forth; revealing to you the harmony between God's word and His works.

They are witnesses that there is no permanent decadence or corruption or evil in the universe; that decay and death and change are but the elements of growth, a progressive unfolding into higher life and blessedness; and that even retrogression itself is but the vibration of the pendulum to and fro, while the index on the dial-plate is steadily moving onward, measuring the forever forward march of time!

Here Nature and Christianity meet — one showing us the great law which rules the physical universe, and the other that this law equally prevails in the moral and spiritual universe. Man is not an exception to the law. The soul, the noblest work of God, the highest in the scale, leads the glorious procession of life; and through every

struggle and discipline, strengthened, educated, purified, it rises at last above the storm and darkness; and, like one climbing the Andes, looks down on the lightning playing beneath, and on the surging sea of mist and cloud, while all around is sunshine, and all above are the eternal splendors!

How ennobling is this conviction! What inspiration and joy are in it! What dignity it gives to man — what glory and honor to God; for His honor and glory rest in the goodness and happiness and spiritual exaltation of His family!

What worth it adds to the Gospel when it is seen as the expression of this purpose of the Father — as the octave chord with Nature! With what divine loveliness does it invest the person and mission of Christ! How he grows upon our faith, our respect and affection, when we see him as the Saviour not of a few fragments from the wreck of Humanity, but as the great Deliverer of the nations; as doing all he came to do; and at last seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with glory and honor, having a name above every name in earth and heaven, while every knee bows, and every tongue confesses with grateful joy that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

*LET US PRAY.

OUR FATHER, Infinite in Thy Perfections, Affectionate in Thy Providences, and Paternal in all Thy Ways; accept our devout Thanksgivings for

the gift of Thy Son as our Saviour, and the revelations of Thy Will in the Holy Scriptures of Truth. Command Thy blessings upon us and sanctify unto us this hour of worship. Quicken our love of Thee, of Thy Son, of Thy Truth. Let Thy protection be over us as we go to our homes. Keep us in the midst of toil, of danger, and of trial; and vouchsafe Thy support, through the hopes of a blessed immortality, in the solemn hour of death. And to Thine ever-adorable name, be ascriptions of praise forevermore. AMEN.

RELIGION A SOURCE OF STRENGTH.

BY REV. CHARLES A. SKINNER. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 2 COR. XII.

When I am weak, then am I strong.—2 COR. XII. 10.

THIS statement of the apostle, on the face of it, is paradoxical and seemingly contradictory; for when a man is weak how can he be strong? But, if we look into the matter a little more critically, we shall find that it contains a truth, and a magnificent truth. Some of the noblest achievements the world has ever witnessed have been wrought out through weakness and much tribulation. The weakness of tear-eyed woman is her very strength.

In connection with our text, the apostle has been speaking of the trials and persecutions which he had experienced. But, though the arm of physical power which opposes him be stronger than his own, though he may be overborne by numbers, though chains may bind his limbs and he be cast into prison, he feels stronger than all these things. He even glories in his tribulation, feeling that whatever persecution may do, that by superior

physical force however it may crush down, there is one power it cannot overcome, and that is the power of God; and he feels that this power is around him. "Therefore," he says, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." Paul showed in his life, what the whole history of man exhibits, that faith in divine protection, devotion to conscience, firmness in moral action, are able to rise above every opposition, and to trample under foot resistance, however gigantic it may be. Although, as we have said, the right may be overcome by a superior physical force, so far as the outward is concerned, yet there is a moral power and grandeur which rises above the ruins, that is absolutely immortal.

Nero had physical power, and he used it for the most fiendish purposes. As Emperor his word was usually law, and his corrupt and cowardly soldiers waded through human blood at his bidding. He was the determined foe and persecutor of Christianity, and Peter he crucified and Paul he beheaded. But what was Nero's strength compared with the strength of the weak apostles whom he slew? Nero's name has gone down in shame and infamy and blood. There is no power in that name now to gather friends and disciples; there is no one to rise up and call him blessed; no one is made happier and better for his having lived. His name is not mentioned but with a shudder

and with scorn. But the names of the humble disciples whom he had the physical power to kill, are a host in themselves; they are rallying forces of strength. A power went out from the cross on which Peter was crucified, and the block on which Paul was beheaded, that has stretched down through the sublime ages that have intervened, and these weak disciples stand up and preach to-day in all the Christian churches throughout the world; and to how many are the blessed words which they utter life and hope and joy. To how many thousands and millions have they preached in every age since they lived; and how many, on this Christian Sabbath as they repeat their words, are drawing from them strength and encouragement and hope. On the day of Pentecost when Peter stood up and preached to the multitude, we are told that there "were added to them about three thousand souls." But no one may tell to how many millions that sermon has been preached since the day of Pentecost, and how many souls have been added to the church by it. Nero made a master mistake,—a mistake which many a tyrant and usurper has made, by supposing that he could stop the apostles' preaching when he put an end to their lives. Though they were weak, yet were they strong; and from their very dungeons and prisons, where through their weakness they had been driven, they uttered most eloquent words. What a voice of power went out from the dungeon at Rome, where Paul was confined. He tells his

brethren at Philippi what was accomplished by his weakness. He says to them, "I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." When the enemies of truth thus thought to crush the Gospel by imprisoning Paul, they only assisted in spreading that Gospel, for when Paul went in bonds into the prison at Rome, he carried God's truth with him, even into the very palace of the Cæsars. And more than this, his bonds and persecutions roused the brethren to new life and zeal; so that, "waxing confident by his bonds, they were much more bold to speak the word without fear." There in his prison, chained hand and foot, weak indeed, with a whole empire against him, as the tidings came to him of the new life which his bonds infused into the brethren, he could exclaim, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Though confined in his grated cell surrounded by bristling guards, whose head the Emperor's word could cut from his shoulders, yet he could lift up his shackled hands and defy them all. He possessed a power that Emperors and Kings, and a whole nation with banners, could not destroy. Time has proved that though all these things have been arrayed against the simple truth uttered by the

apostle, yet it has risen above and out-lived them all.

But there is not only this strength which persecution gives to the thing it persecutes, spreading abroad its fame through its very persecution — the light of the flames of martyrdom being beacon-fires for the rallying of hosts—but there is a strength which comes to the individual soul which no tyrant can crush or destroy. Take the man who is conscious that he is in the right, throw him into the dungeon, load him down with chains, secure him with bolts and bars, then go if you please and behead him as John was beheaded in prison, yet your victim, lying pale and dead at your feet, is stronger than you are, standing over him with your dripping sword. The old martyrs' ashes preach most eloquently from their graves.

What, then, we ask, made the martyrs and heroes so strong in their weakness; and why were they so calm and so joyous even in the midst of physical defeat, and while enduring all the tortures that a fiendish ingenuity could invent? To such a question, this answer must be given: It was their *religion*, which was warm and active in their souls. I know it is thought by some that religion is unfavorable to the development of a strong, manly character; that it is effeminate in its influences; that, although it may make good, peaceable citizens and perhaps kind people, yet for a manly, vigorous character, a capacity to endure toil and hardship, we must look to other modes of training. This is

only one of the mistakes that skepticism falls into. If I were to seek out the most sublime instances of courage and moral heroism which our world has ever afforded, I should go and seek them among the ranks of the great religious army; and I should not be disappointed. For whatever attainments a man may possess, however great his intellect and superior his culture, there is one thing, if he does not yet consciously possess it, that will be the crown and the glory of all the rest; and that is a religious principle, elevating, purifying, uplifting, and strengthening. Whatever strength of character he may possess, this will make him stronger. And there is a very "good and sufficient reason" why it should. It is because religion is in accordance with man's nature, not opposed to it. The man without this conscious religion is not as strong as the man with it, though equal in every other respect. And the reason of it is, the one works against nature; the other, with it. Now our nature must not be trifled with; it claims its rights, and if they are not yielded, woe is the man who withholds them.

For instance; it is the nature of our physical organism to claim food. This is its right. It claims it as the price that must be paid for life. "Pay me that thou owest," is its constant utterance. Now the man who should attempt to resist this claim, is worse than foolish; he is mad. He will find nature an inexorable creditor. The man who should attempt to resist the natural claim of our

physical system for food, would find that he was battling against a host that he could not overcome; and in the contest he would himself grow weaker and feebler until at last he must needs lie down and die. But our physical nature is not all we possess; the soul cries out for God and for religion; and he who resists this claim of his soul, will find that he is working against himself, against his own interests, against his own strength, against his own manliness. And he, too, will grow weaker and feebler until he becomes the mere skeleton of the man he might otherwise be. When he fights against the religious promptings of his soul, he fights against his own nature. Religion to the soul is what food is to the body; it makes us strong. When we fight against it, we are fighting against a fearful odds, and we are weak. We are going against wind and tide and current; and nature and God are against us. But when we allow our religious nature to have its legitimate influence over us, to be governed properly by it, then are we working in harmony with nature, in harmony with ourselves, in harmony with God.

The wind fills the sails of our ship; the current flows in the same direction we would sail; and on we go, strong and vigorous, to reach the port. This is the reason, therefore, that the religious man is the strongest man. It was this that made Paul feel that when he was weak then he was strong.

Look at the power which a religious man pos-

sesses to endure suffering. See this exemplified in the calmness and even cheerfulness with which old martyrs bowed down before flame and sword. We all of us instinctively shrink from pain. The most herculean dreads the probing of the surgeon's lance, or the amputation of a finger. But look at the saintly old martyr; see him armed and panoplied for the contest. His "loins are girt about with truth;" he has on the "breastplate of righteousness;" his "feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;" he takes the "shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; and praying with all prayer and supplication in the spirit," he marches up with steady and unfaltering step into the face of all that malice can devise or tyranny inflict. He smiles at the stake, and goes up on his chariot of fire singing his sweetest and his holiest songs. All the "fiery darts of the wicked," the religious man is able to withstand.

We have all heard of the Pilgrims' wrongs and the Pilgrims' sufferings. We have all heard the story of the cold winter reception that was given them on these shores; how they suffered, how they died, and how they triumphed. Their religion made them all strong to bear their trials. We know, also, how the religion of the Scotch Covenanters enabled them to bear their persecutions.

Some two hundred years ago, according to Macaulay, there lived in England and Scotland an individual named John Graham; "One of that

brood of monsters," says a writer, "which, as vipers and rattlesnakes, seem born to centralize and incarnate the poison of the world." The story ran that Graham and his associates "used in their revels to play at the torments of hell, and to call each other by the names of devils and damned souls." The chief of this tophet on earth, was commissioned to exterminate the Covenanters. One day this commissioner caught a Scotch girl, whose grievous offence was that she was a Covenanter. She was a beautiful maiden of eighteen years. Graham ordered her to be tied to a stake in the sea at low water mark, and to be left to drown as the tide slowly came in. When this was done, Graham and his associates sat down on the shore to gloat over the agonies and death of their victim. It was a scene not soon to be forgotten even by those hard-hearted wretches. As the sea drew nearer and nearer she gave no sign of alarm, but in a clear, sweet voice she lifted up her soul in thanksgiving to God; and then in the sea she sung and prayed until her voice was choked by the advancing waves; and, as the waters broke over her head, her soul floated away with her song to her God and to heaven. Now why should weak and trembling woman have such strength to bear such martyrdom? There is one answer and one only that must be given. It was her religious faith. In the hour when the slowly strangling sea swept around her, she with Paul could exclaim, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

But religion not only gives us strength to *endure* suffering, but it also has the power to *charm it away*. I suppose the martyr who goes to the stake with his religious principle alive and active, sometimes hardly feels the flame, or knows that he has any body. The soul, that no flame and no persecution can reach, fortified by its religion, holds the mastery. When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, bowed under his stony baptism, he "saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Standing there in the strength of his religious faith, he was calm and unmoved at whatever his foes might do. As he stood there bearing witness to the truth, and saw heaven opened, and the glory of God streaming down upon him, what did he care for, or what did he feel of the stones that beat only against the outer ramparts of the citadel within which he was secure and unharmed? His thought was not with the body, but with the soul, and with the "glory of God." And when persecution has done its work, and his poor body was all loop-holed, through which his soul might escape, "he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he said this, he fell asleep." Mark the expression. It does not say that he struggled in agony, and died in torment; but so calmly and serenely did his soul pass away, that it is recorded, "*he fell asleep.*" Why comes this strange peace over the soul? Why, amid flickering flames shine out the calm faces of saints

about to go to their rest and to their glory? It is because our immortality is superior to our mortality. It is because our souls are the masters of our bodies. It is because religion in the soul can fortify it, and charm away suffering from the body. Says the poet: —

> "The darts of anguish fix not where the seat
> Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified
> By acquiescence in the Will supreme."

From all these things we learn that the religious man is the strongest man; and why he is so, is because religion is made for the soul, and the soul for religion, as air is made for the lungs, and the lungs for the air; and we cannot be healthy and strong without religion for the soul, more than we can without air for the lungs. A religious life is our highest joy, and our greatest glory. AMEN.

LET US PRAY.

FATHER ALMIGHTY; we thank Thee that Thou hast made us as we are, and that to each want and power of our being when it cries to Thee, Thou dost answer. Seed for the sower, bread for the eater, and religion for the soul. Make us thankful to Thee who dost temper and adjust all things to our nature; and may we receive Thy gifts as designed for our highest glory and strength; and Thy name be praised, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

SLEEP AND DEATH.

BY REV. A. R. ABBOTT. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 COR. XV.

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.—PSALMS IV. 8.

SLEEP is one of the earliest metaphors by which the mysterious and solemn event of death was spoken of among men. And since it is a figure sanctioned by the usage of the Saviour himself in more instances than one; since, indeed, the New Testament shows it to have been a favorite form of expression among the early disciples; we may well continue the custom, if we will take a little care against being led astray by false analogies.

It is not difficult, I think, to account for the antiquity of this representation. That it is very ancient we know; for it was in use long before the days of Moses; but how early it became the language of the living concerning the departed, we cannot know. First, the metaphor rests evidently upon the similarity of physical appearances in sleep and in death. In a calm, deep, undisturbed slumber, how painfully apparent, sometimes, is the likeness of death; the passionless face, the closed eye,

the silent tongue, the nerveless limbs, the motionless frame — motionless, at least, except to that close observation that detects in the gentle heaving of the bosom the quiet respirations of peaceful sleep.

Nor does the similarity end here. It is said by those who have made such topics their study, that in perfect sleep, as in death, the mind resigns all dominion over the body. It is only disturbed or imperfect sleep, a kind of half-sleep, in which some of the faculties still remain active without the balance or guidance of others; it is only such sleep that leaves any traces upon the memory. In profound slumber we are for the time being just as much inhabitants of another world as we shall be when the spirit shall resign permanently her dominion over these physical organs, and the frail bonds that now unite her to this tabernacle of clay shall be completely severed. Then we know nothing of what is passing around us. Those strange scenes that sometimes flit before the mind during our slumbers; those fragments of pictures from the great canvas of memory, grouped together often in such fantastic relations as to defy all rules of order or explanation; those strange freaks of some faculty awake while the others sleep, which we call dreams, are unknown in perfect sleep. Then, for the time, the oblivion of this world is complete; and as we gaze on the face of the sleeper, we cease to wonder that from remote antiquity men have spoken of death as a sleep.

Again, the use of this metaphor rests upon a spiritual basis no less than upon physical appearances. Natural sleep, however profound, is not extinction of being. It does not mar one lineament of the spirit, or impair one faculty of the mind. So men have never consented to believe that death is the annihilation of existence. The conviction has been among all people, that the essential being still lives, though it puts off this garment of clay. Sometimes, 't is true, men who have lost themselves in the mazes of speculation; men who have sought to reduce the intuitive yearning of the human soul for a future life to the gross forms of their materialism, have spoken of death as a sleep, in a sense unknown to the great majority of mankind. They say, absurdly enough, that death is an eternal sleep; forgetting that their language contains its own refutation. Sleep, from its very nature, cannot be eternal. A being cannot sleep who does not exist; and if death be annihilation, then there is nothing remaining that can with any propriety be said to sleep. These two facts — the physical analogy, and the deeper, but equally real, spiritual analogy, furnish abundant reasons why, among all people, sleep has become so familiar a representative of death.

But the extent and perfection of the analogy will be better understood if we attempt to compare a little more carefully some of the more important particulars in which they agree. Sleep is the natural restorative of our powers when

exhausted by toil, anxiety, sorrow, or care. In the ordinary labor of life, when the task of the day is done, and the weariness of incessant toil weighs heavily upon the energies of both body and mind; when in the daily routine of business, we have been perplexed and perhaps irritated by the unscrupulous competition we have had to encounter from those who, in their hot haste to be rich, seem ready to forget that God rules on earth no less than in heaven; when our spirits droop in the perpetual din and turmoil of the dusty thoroughfares of traffic, and we are sore under the constant chafing of the harness of business, and feel the moving of that within us which no *such* occupation of body or mind can satisfy, that which longs for a purer life and a nobler duty, — O, then, how grateful to the troubled spirit and languid body are the gathering shadows and stillness of night. To the eye that has been wearied by the constant glare of day, or confused by the perpetual whirl of life's business or pleasure, how soothing to look up into those serene depths of space which the darkness alone reveals, among the shining garniture of the heavens, where reigns the quietness of God's spirit; where *sleep* — so still and peaceful do they appear — the calmness and majesty of creative Wisdom and Power. How grateful to the perturbed spirit, how soothing to the overtaxed and throbbing brain, how refreshing to the oppressed and sinking body, is the com-

ing of night, with her healing cup of repose and her crown of sleep. How gladly and how earnestly do the weary, the care-worn, and the sorrowing seek the soft, refreshing embrace of sleep. How powerful, yet how gentle is her touch. How lightly her finger rests upon the drooping lid. How softly she spreads over the weary spirit the veil that shuts out care, and pain, and sorrow. Yet, with what invigorating power does she move all the vital energies of our nature. Into the deepest recesses of our being penetrates her restoring balm. Hers is not a destructive, but rather a re-creative power. Mighty as is her dominion, irresistibly as her influence gathers up all our jaded powers, not one fibre of life does she waste or destroy. And, at the appointed time, we rise from her embrace — that transitory oblivion — that "death of each day's life" — with powers, not wasted, but renewed; not exhausted, but invigorated; the elasticity of body and mind restored, to engage anew in the labors and duties of life. And is there not, my friends, in all essential points, a striking analogy between death and sleep?

When the labor of life's day is done, and all its tasks finished; when the poor toil-worn and feeble body trembles along the few painful steps that yet remain between it and the appointed rest; when the hungry spirit turns loathing away from the toil and pleasures, wealth and amusements of the world; when the soul realizes how empty and hollow are the prizes for which we strive so

earnestly; when she sees how little of all that men labor for here enriches her, enlarges her dominion, beautifies her possessions, or develops her immortal powers; when *we* have learned the sad, but salutary lesson, that, however wisely this world may be adapted to our condition and wants as physical beings, it can be no permanent home for the soul; when we find these perishable organs decaying, becoming unfit instruments for the imperishable mind; when the eye is dim, and the ear dull, and the tongue heavy; when cunning has forsaken the hand, and fleetness has deserted the foot; when those whom we have loved as life itself have been removed one by one from our embrace — passing through the valley of shadows to inhabit the clear mountain-tops where the sunlight of God's love is obscured by no night and clouded by no sorrow — and we are left alone, waiting the arrival of our Father's messenger; — O, then, how grateful to the earth-worn spirit are the gathering shadows and serene quiet of life's closing day. When the eye is weary of the glitter and show of this passing scene, how blissful to look away to that world of quiet peace; that world that becomes more and more distinct to our view, and shines with more resplendent and inviting glory, as the light of this world declines. When the sun of this mortal life is setting, the beauty and glory of the immortal beams upon us with increasing splendors; as we see the glory of the physical heavens only when the sun is set.

How grateful to the weary and sorrowing spirit to look away to that land of rest and repose; to anticipate the time when it shall put off this feeble and perishable garment for one that is incorruptible and immortal.

I know well how we shrink from the icy touch of the stern messenger, while the tide of health pours full and free through the heart; while we are blest with the warm affection of generous friends, and feel that our love is a blessing to them. So, in the morning, when we rise from the couch of repose, refreshed and invigorated for the toils and duties of the day, we do not seek the blessing of sleep. But when the day is past, and the weariness of toil oppresses and cares perplex and anxieties disturb us, then how sweet the thought of our nightly repose. So when the day of life is past, and its cares, infirmities, and sorrows over-burden the spirit and dry up the springs of its joy, then we welcome the hand, cold though it be, that conducts us to our rest.

Again, sleep is not the object or the aim of life. It is only a transitory process, rendered necessary by the imperfection of our physical constitution, by which our exhausted powers and flagging energies are renewed and invigorated. Thus we are enabled, through the renovation of each night's repose, to encounter anew the toils and cares of each succeeding day. There may be, we can readily imagine — nay, I do not doubt but there are, among the myriads of God's creatures, beings so constituted

that they do not need such seasons of repose to revive their waning powers; beings of whose substance and essence, activity is a natural property, as repose is the natural property of their physical bodies. And here, too, the analogy between death and sleep holds good. Death is no more the object and aim of existence than sleep is of life. It is only a brief process through which we pass before we can be prepared for the labors and duties of another life. It is the laying off of this perishable garment preparatory to putting on the imperishable; putting off the mortal, that we may put on the immortal, in readiness for that home which flesh and blood cannot inherit. As sleep is a transient process, from which we soon arise with invigorated powers for new and higher duties; so, following out the analogy which the Saviour himself has sanctioned by use, death is a process still more transient, from which the spirit arises, emancipated from all material fetters; delivered from all the temptations, passions, and pains that approached it through the avenue of the body; rising above all the joys of time and clouds of sense, with all its glorious powers and capacities free for their most perfect and harmonious development. Death no more than sleep is to maintain a protracted dominion over the soul. "To-day" — said the Saviour to the penitent thief at his side, in the agonies of death — "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And the great apostle of the Gentiles, anticipating the joys of that heavenly

home, the riches of which it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive, desired to be delivered from this earthly house, not that he would be unclothed, but that mortality might be swallowed up of life. He was straightened between a desire to remain and employ his powers in the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and a desire "to depart and be with Christ which is far better." To him, evidently, death was not to be a *long* sleep. There was no profound abyss between his earthly and heavenly house. And as we find no difficulty in imagining beings so constituted that sleep is not necessary to renovate their powers, or refresh their systems, so we find as little difficulty in believing that there are beings of constitution so ethereal and pure, that their essential nature does not need to be liberated from the bondage of grosser elements by the emancipating process of death. It surely were as easy for God to people the immortal abodes with beings of incorruptible nature, already in the enjoyment of their eternal estate — such as we suppose the angels to be — it were as easy, for Him thus to people the spirit world, as to introduce beings there through the gates of mortality. And if, for a moment, a murmur spring in our bosom, that we were not so favored as to inhabit that bright home without the painful experience of this mortal lot, let that murmur be silenced by gratitude that we, so feeble, so frail, but the insects of a day, and brother of the worm, in our present state, are assured of a destiny so glorious, in the resur-

rection, that we shall be equal to the angels of God in heaven.

Again, sleep is an irresistible power. Sometimes, under powerful stimulants of body or mind, the influence of sleep may be resisted for a season. There is hardly a more beautiful or touching picture in this world, than to see the frailties of our nature conquered for the time by our nobler and holier affections; to see a father or mother, by the intensity of their love, raised above the mere demands of the body, resisting successfully the all-prevailing power of sleep, and, for days and nights in succession, watching incessantly by the bed-side of a suffering child. We may well thank God for such an exhibition of the power of love. But when the crisis is past — as pass it must, either in joy or grief — then the demands of nature overpower us, and we resign ourselves without distrust to the dominion of sleep, that twin-brother of death. The weary, storm-battered mariner, who, day after day and night after night, has clung with the tenacity of despair to the shuddering helm of his tempest-driven barque, searching with sleepless eye for sun, moon, and star to shape his wandering course, sees at length the welcome, though feeble ray from some well known headland, "streaming o'er ocean's stormy wave;" and even while, with torn canvas, splintered spars, and quivering masts, his reeling vessel staggers into the quiet, land-locked harbor, he sinks down under the soothing, but irresistible power of sleep. Even upon the

battlefield, amid the roar of cannon and the revel of slaughter, the soldier wearied with watching and toil, heedless of the engines of destruction that swell the tide of carnage around him, welcomes the restoring touch of sleep. To say, then, that sleep is a necessity of our nature, is only to say we are human. So the storm-tossed voyager on life's tempestuous ocean, whose frail barque has long been driven by wind and wave, guided by the trembling needle of faith that points forever to the polar star of God's unchanging love, when the clouds of sorrow overshadow the heavens and the tempests of disease assail yet more fiercely his feeble and transitory abode, sighs for the serene rest of that heaven above, where no clouds ever obscure the light of the Father's love, and no tempests ever beat upon those homes of bliss. At last, his weary, closing eye catches the guiding ray from the light-house of hope on the headlands of heaven, and he sinks into that restoring slumber, that

> "Blessed sleep
> From which none ever wake to weep."

And the soldier, too, amid the tented fields of mortality, surrounded by the wreck and ruin of all worldly ambition and selfish pride, sinks to rest, confident of an inheritance to which all earthly dominion, power, and splendor are only as dust and dross.

How we wake from that sleep which we call death; what garments we shall put on in the morn-

ing of that endless day, or how precisely we put off these present garments; what kind of instruments, exactly, will then be appropriate to our use; or just what kind of abodes will be assigned us in that house of many mansions; what new mode of activity our powers will then adopt,— these and other similar details we do not know. It is simply a revival of the old question which, in the days of the apostles, perplexed the Corinthian Church: "How are the dead raised up?" On certain great important points the apostle gave them all necessary information. It is sown a natural body, in corruption, dishonor, and weakness; it is raised a spiritual body, in incorruption, glory, and power; differing from one another, it may be, as among the stars where all are glorious, one star differs from another in glory. We are first natural, afterwards spiritual. Adam is the representative of the natural and earthy, Christ of the spiritual and heavenly. As in this mortal state we bear the image of Adam, so in the immortal state we shall bear the image of Christ. It is not a world for the residence of flesh and blood; but one for us to inhabit when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal be clothed in immortality. Then death is robbed of his sting and the grave despoiled of her victory; the grim tyrant, as death is too often regarded, becomes through Christ the messenger to conduct us to our eternal home. But this is no victory of ours. Let us bless God, then, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus

Christ. Of so much the apostle assured the Corinthians; enough to satisfy our faith and confirm our hope; though, doubtless, not enough to gratify a morbid curiosity. But if we know not precisely by what method or to what extent death acts upon our being, neither are we better informed about the action of sleep. How it is that her magic hand reaches the deepest recesses of our nature, bracing the languid muscle, tuning the quivering nerve, lending new wings to the imagination, and a keener edge to the intellect, we cannot tell. So that, even in our ignorance of their modes of operation, the parallel between sleep and death still holds good; and as we pass without fear through the oft repeated process of the first; so let approach the solemn and untried experience of the second, with at least a serene faith and holy trust in God; for it is He, and He only, that makes us dwell in safety, whether we "wrap the drapery of our couch about us and lie down to pleasant dreams," or sink in those slumbers whose morning dawns on a brighter day than this.

I have somewhere seen a beautiful little parable from a German writer, I think, representing death and sleep as twin angels of mercy, going forth together to perform their different labors, equally benevolent, but not equally acceptable to man. As they drew near the cities of human abode, they reclined together upon a flowery mound, till the shades of evening closed around; then the angel of sleep arose and scattered from his hand

the slumbers that were to refresh the weary and comfort the sorrowing sons of men. Soon every dwelling was hushed in sweet sleep. The husbandman forgot his labor; the old man had laid aside his staff; the infant smiled in its cradle; the sick forgot their pain; the mourners their grief, and the poor their care. Then the angel of sleep exclaimed, as he lay down again beside his brother, his countenance beaming with joy, "When the morning comes, men will praise me as their friend and benefactor." But his companion, the angel of death, with melancholy brow, replied: "Alas! I may not like thee rejoice in the cheerful thanks of mankind; they call me their enemy, the destroyer of their peace." "My dear brother," replied the angel of sleep, "men bless me when waking refreshed from their slumber; and surely they will recognize thee too as their friend, and bless thee, when they wake in that glorious morning above."

I have thus endeavored to point out some of the more striking points of similarity between sleep and death. Both, I humbly trust, are merciful provisions of our heavenly Father to supply the necessities of our nature. And we accept so cordially the ministrations of the one, and shrink so sensitively from those of the other, because in the one case we know the healing and renovating power, while in the other we can only hope, trust, and believe. Yet, however strong may be our faith, and however unwavering our trust, the true

Christian attitude towards that great mystery of our being, the change from mortality to immortality, is that of awe and reverence. I cannot agree with those who insist that the Christian, under all circumstances, must hail with transports of joy the approach of his mortal dissolution. Such a rule would impeach the faith of Jesus himself, and convert that touching scene of Gethsemane, all glowing with the play of the tenderest and holiest human sympathies, into an exhibition of unmanly weakness which his disciple may not imitate. Surely, if he prayed, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me;" if his soul shrank before the awful agonies of the last hour, then that requirement which demands that death must always be met with triumphant joy, is the offspring of either fanaticism or superstition. In this, also, it is certainly enough that the disciple be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. It was only under the severest forms of suffering that the holy men of old longed and prayed for the relief of death. Job, in the extremity of his sorrow, prayed that even the grave might hide him from his afflictions. Death can never be regarded by the Christian with raptures of joy. The great change is fraught with too deep a mystery. When it removes us from extreme suffering, from which there is no hope of other relief, we may welcome it with calm satisfaction, and unwavering hope. And when we feel that our work here is done; that to remain longer would probably add nothing

desirable to us or to others; when forewarned by the ravages of incurable disease, or by the natural decay of our powers, that the time of our rest cannot be far distant; — then, to approach the hour of mortal dissolution with a calm trust in God — this is the true Christian spirit. Like Job, "all the days of our appointed time will we wait, till our change come," and then, "we will lay us down in peace and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest us dwell in safety." AMEN.

LET US PRAY.

Ever merciful and indulgent God: With unfeigned gratitude would we thank Thee that Thou hast not left us in darkness and doubt concerning the future life; but in the richness of Thy mercy Thou hast brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel. Grant, O Father, that in all our tribulations we may find that Gospel the source of abundant consolation; that, in prosperity or adversity, in health or sickness, in life or death, it may shed upon our pathway its divine and holy light. May those especially whom Thou hast touched with the finger of bereavement, find in the assurances of Thy love, a balm for their stricken and lonely hearts. Strengthen all our souls with the reflection that whether we wake or sleep, Thou only makest us dwell in safety; that whether our dear ones are permitted to remain with us here, or are taken to that better home above, they are still the objects of Thy mercy and

the children of Thy love; that, whether living or dying, we are the Lord's. Guide us all by Thy grace through the remainder of our mortal journey; pardon our transgressions; deliver us from evil and receive us to Thyself, with the fulness of the ransomed family of man, to unite in praising Thy holy name forever. AMEN.

MAN A RELIGIOUS BEING.

BY REV. D. P. BUNN. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ROM. XII.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. — MATT. IV. 4.

THESE words were spoken by our Saviour, under very peculiar circumstances, and require more than a passing notice at our hands. The sacred history informs us, that "Jesus was led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. And after fasting forty days and nights he became hungry;" when the Tempter is represented as having come to him saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." To this suggestion our Saviour did not, even for a moment, give heed; but in the language of our text, not only administered a withering rebuke, but at the same time disclosed to the human family an important *truth* — one, too, which was at that time, and even now is, to a great extent almost wholly overlooked; namely, that man is possessed of a moral or spiritual nature, as well as an animal and intellectual one, and that it is quite as im-

portant and as indispensably necessary to secure the highest degree of happiness, that the wants of the spiritual should be supplied, as those of the natural. That the body may be strong and vigorous, and its faculties active and efficient, it must receive proper nourishment and exercise. It is not sufficient that the body receive a full supply of nutritious food; if we would secure strength and activity, it must have proper exercise. The nerves and muscles must be properly trained, in order to a full development of its organic constitution. So it is in relation to the mental or intellectual organism. It must receive strength by proper culture, and activity by exercise and proper training. All the functions of the body and *faculties* of the mind may thus become strong and active, and yield us the greatest degree of happiness of which they are capable.

But while we may be in the full enjoyment of all the pleasures to be derived from a full development of the organic and mental constitutions, our moral sentiments, from want of proper nourishment and exercise, may be weak and sickly, dead and inactive, and consequently wholly unable to yield us those pure and lofty pleasures which at once constitute the highest interest and greatest happiness of the human soul. As the full development and activity of the organic constitution are secured by proper culture and training, so the moral sentiments must receive proper nourishment and exercise, in order to their strength and activity. And

as enjoyment depends in a very great degree upon the activity of the faculties, and as the activity of the faculties depends so much upon the *proper* exercise of them, how important is it that we properly cultivate and exercise those high and holy sentiments, the God of nature and of the Bible has implanted within us. As we prize our greatest happiness and nearest approximation to the moral perfections of the great Author of our being, so should we regard the great moral principle couched in the language of our text; "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

How untiring are our efforts to secure that bread necessary to sustain and invigorate our bodies which perish; and yet how feeble our efforts to secure that bread from heaven which nourisheth unto everlasting life — or in other words, imparts life and vigor to our moral powers! Owing to the feebleness or rather want of effort to secure the bread of life to our souls, we pine away and die. Whilst our moral powers are dead and inactive, they cannot direct and control, as was doubtless intended, the organic and mental powers of our being. This being the case, our appetites and passions run into all the *excesses* of unbridled lust and unrestrained ambition.

How much of all the misery and wretchedness which mar the fair face of society, which manifest themselves in the shape of cries and tears, of groans and sighs, of insanity and suicide, exist from

want of strength and activity in our moral powers, properly to direct and sufficiently to restrain our passions and ambition. These were given us for wise and good purposes, and when properly directed and restrained by a just sense of moral *principle*, are productive of a good degree of pleasure and happiness; but when permitted to act without the direction and restraint of the moral powers, they run into the greatest excesses, and are productive of the most disastrous consequences. Our Saviour, no doubt, had his mind upon this subject, when he uttered the language of the text. He could discover at a glance the ruinous consequences of unrestrained passions and ambition. And at a glance, too, he could discover the great want of moral life and activity in the soul, to direct and control the desires and appetites of the body and of the mind. The word of God, or the great moral principles of the New Testament, constitute the bread of life, or that divine principle which imparts life and activity to the moral man — which enables him to control the appetites and passions, and keep them within their legitimate bounds. How appropriate, then, the words of the text, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Not that his body should not live by bread, which is the staff of life; but that he had, also, a moral and religious constitution, which required sustenance to render it healthy and vigorous — a condition indispensable to our dearest interests and highest happiness. No natural faculty exists in the human constitution which is not neces-

sary to our happiness; neither do the laws of God forbid the proper use of any of them. It is the improper and excessive use which constitutes sin; which, instead of securing happiness, brings upon us misery; which is forbidden in the laws of the Divine Being. Neither has the Creator implanted within us desires for the gratification of which He has made no provision. Behold how rich and bountiful a provision is made for the sustenance of our bodies, and the gratification of the desires common to our organic and mental constitutions! Has God created us with moral wants — He has provided means for their satisfaction. Has He implanted within us moral or religious desires — He has furnished the means of gratification.

The author of our text represents himself as the "living bread which came down from heaven to give life to the world." The world is here represented as being dead — *dead* in a moral or spiritual sense. To impart new life to man, to elevate him in the scale of moral being, to secure his highest interests and happiness by quickening his moral sentiments, our Saviour came into this world, lived, taught, suffered, and died.

As example is one of the most efficient methods of instruction, let us for a few moments refer to the life of Christ. He was a man possessed of a constitution similar to our own; subject to temptations arising from appetites, passions, and desires, common to nature. "He was tempted in all points like

unto us." And here permit us to remark, that if we can with certainty ascertain how, and by whom, or by what we are tempted, we shall have a satisfactory answer to the question, who or what tempted our Saviour? James informs us fully upon this point. He says, "Every man is tempted when he is led away of his own lust, and enticed; and lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," which is the penalty of the law.

You will perceive by this quotation, that lust or desire, abstractly considered, is harmless; that sin is committed only by yielding to the temptation it presents. Hence you will readily see, that, although he "was tempted in all points like unto us," yet never permitting lust or desire to conceive, or never yielding to temptation, "he was without sin." After having fasted forty days, it is said he became a hungered. Hunger, therefore, was doubtless the tempter, and suggested that the Saviour exert the mighty power given him by the Father for higher and holier purposes, in turning the stones into bread. To this suggestion our Saviour did not for a moment give heed; since he regarded the discipline through which he was then passing, as a part of the means by which his Father designed to perfect him.

But why, we may enquire, did not our Saviour yield to temptation, and thus commit sin as do we? We answer, because of the superior strength and activity of his moral sentiments, which held com-

plete control over his appetites, passions, and desires. So pure and spotless was the life of Christ, that the bitterest opposers of Christianity have rarely attempted to point out the least foible in his character. In point of moral purity, then, we have an example in the person and life of Christ, the imitation of which should call forth our noblest powers.

If we desire an example of justice and conformity to law, behold it in the language and conduct of the Saviour when asked if it were lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar. "Render," said he, "unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

If we would have an example of humility, behold him washing his disciples' feet. If we would see an example of tenderness and compassion, behold him weep at the tomb of Lazarus, and mingle his tears with those of Mary and Martha. If we desire an example of true Christian fortitude, hear him bear witness to the truth at the Bar of Pilate, and see him meet the monster death with unflinching courage. If we would profit by an example of true Christian love and forgiveness, hear him, while surrounded by his enemies and murderers, suffering the most excruciating tortures upon the cross, cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" In his life, then, we have a bright and living example of moral purity, justice, and conformity to law; of humility, tenderness, and compassion; of true fortitude, and of Divine forgiveness. These examples were given us for

our imitation; and every effort on our part to copy them, serves to invigorate our moral powers, as bread strengthens our bodies.

But our Saviour was also a teacher. His precepts, like his life, were pure, noble, and Godlike. Hear them. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." "Weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice." Such were some of the moral teachings of the Saviour of mankind. Unlike the ancient philosophers, he lived the principles he taught. He carried out in his life the philosophy he taught the world; so that by example, as well as precept, he might make the strongest and most lasting impressions upon the minds of his hearers.

When we avail ourselves of the word of God, and of the example and precepts of His Son, then shall we be truly living by every "word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Man shall not live by bread alone. No; he cannot live, as a moral being, without the proper food to sustain moral life. What bread is to the body, Christ and his precepts are to the soul. And, as it is necessary in order to obtain strength and vigor of body to eat bread, so Christ requires us to "eat his body

and to drink his blood." What we understand by eating the body of Christ is, the receiving of him by faith as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. By drinking his blood, the drinking-in of the spirit of divine grace, which, like the limped stream, runs through all the teachings of the Son of God.

When our moral nature obtains its needed strength and vigor by the reception of this heavenly nourishment, then will our moral powers direct and control our appetites and passions. Then shall we, like our blessed Master, when temptations present themselves, be able to say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When the world presents itself in its most enticing and bewitching forms, and promises us its vast and glittering wealth upon the condition that we fall down and worship at the altar of mammon, we shall be enabled to reply, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." And when we are assailed by Satan, who would make us shrink from duty by promising us greater happiness in its neglect than in its performance, we shall be able triumphantly to say, "Get thee behind me Satan; for thou savorest the things of earth, and not the things of God."

But the Saviour also *suffered* upon the earth, even upon the cross. Not, however, as some imagine, to save believers from suffering the just punishment of their sins, but to give us an example

of patience and resignation to the will of God in all the sorrow and suffering incident to this mortal and imperfect state. Strange as it may appear to some, it seems to be the economy of God to perfect His children through suffering. Does not an Apostle say, "For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering?" If the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, his soldiers should not expect less. "It is enough that the disciple be as his Lord, and the servant as his Master." Again, saith an Apostle, "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." There seems, therefore, to be a sanctifying influence in suffering which should stimulate us to bear it with that patience and fortitude, which sustained the Son of God in the hour of his deepest suffering.

But he also *died*, not as many suppose to satisfy divine justice and reconcile his Father to us, but that he might burst the bars of death, rob the grave of its gloom, rise triumphant from its cold embrace, lead captivity captive, bring life and immortality to light, and give good gifts unto men. When we, as rational and moral beings, receive by faith the Son of God, and contemplate his glorious character as exhibited in his life, teachings, sufferings, and death; and, lastly, in his triumphant resurrection from the dead; then, indeed, will our moral sentiments receive their needed strength and vigor,

and live upon that spiritual bread "which came down from heaven to give life unto the world." Then, and not until then, shall we enjoy the full measure of happiness arising from a complete development of all our powers. Then shall we find ample scope for the exercise of the higher faculties of our nature, by giving relief to the suffering, by binding up the broken heart, by pouring consolation into the disconsolate bosom, and by inspiring hope in the desponding soul. By the active exercise of these nobler faculties of our being, we shall not only secure to ourselves the highest happiness and the purest pleasures, but we shall also manifest to the world that we are living upon the bread of heaven — or "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Lastly; God's living ministers are commissioned to dispense this bread of life to His famishing children. Christ said unto Peter, "Feed my sheep — feed my lambs." You will observe, it is the bread of life the preacher should deal out, and not the bread of death. The sinner is now dead, and the bread of life only can impart life. But, what reward shall we have for eating the bread of life? Surely, none other than that pleasure derived *from* eating, together with that strength and vigor which it imparts. The provisions of the gospel are to be desired for their own sake; because they are good.

Unfortunately, however, the great mass of the people are often misled, and eat that which is not bread, and labor for that which satisfieth not.

Saith God by the mouth of the prophet, "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." So, my Christian hearers, we need no extraneous reward, as an inducement to partake of the bread of life; much less, the lash of eternal wrath, to force us thereto. Permit me, then, to invite you to partake of the rich bounty of the Gospel feast, that your moral powers may be strong, vigorous, and active; and that you may live in the true spirit of Christianity.

LET US PRAY.

Our Father who art in Heaven: We thank Thee for all the gifts of Thy providence by which our lives are rendered a blessing. Help us to realize Thy goodness in all the means Thou hast provided for the gratification of our numerous wants. May we *ever* remember that Thou hast created us moral and religious beings. Impress deeply upon our minds a just sense of the obligations we are under to Thee and to our fellow men; and grant unto us Thy grace, that we may properly discharge them. Mercifully incline us evermore to eat of the spiritual food which alone can give us real strength and true happiness. May we realize the importance of properly cultivating all our faculties, that we may attain to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION.

BY REV. J. S. BARRY. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 PETER I.

Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as of silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.—1 PETER I. 18, 19.

THE doctrine of Redemption is one of the most prominent doctrines of the Gospel. It is alluded to in the New Testament frequently and earnestly. Paul declares that Christ came to obtain for us "eternal redemption." John addresses him as having "redeemed us to God by his blood." And Christians, accordingly, are designated as "the redeemed of the Lord," to whom Jesus is said to be made, not only "wisdom and righteousness," but, also, "redemption."

In view of these facts, and in view of the importance which attaches to every doctrine of the Bible, it may be profitable to devote the present hour to the consideration of so fruitful a theme; and the questions I shall propose for discussion are, Why is Jesus called our Redeemer? What is the nature of the redemption he effects? How, and from

what, can he be said to redeem us? And who are the subjects of Christian redemption?

Preliminary, however, to the discussion of these questions, it may be proper to consider the meaning of the word *redemption*, particularly as used in the writings of the Bible. How is this word used, and what does it imply? I answer, that the word redemption, as used in the Bible, has primarily and simply the meaning of *deliverance*, and is applied to all forms of evil, whether natural or moral, temporal or spiritual. For instance: in the sixth chapter of Exodus, an account is given of the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt; and Moses was commanded to "say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage; and I will *redeem* you, with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments." David, likewise, in allusion to the Providence which had rescued him from the gathering misfortunes of his earlier days, speaks of God as having "redeemed" him from adversity. And Job, in the midst of his severest afflictions, exclaims, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

But it is worthy of remark here, that in all cases in which God is said to have redeemed men, the redemption on His part was free and gratuitous. No purchase money was paid; no sacrifice was offered; no substitude bled. The redemption was an act of Infinite mercy. "Thus saith the Lord," is the language of Isaiah, "ye have sold yourselves

for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money." And again, he exclaims, "I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses. For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour. In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his *love* and in his *pity* he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

And how, my hearers, can we suppose it to have been otherwise? Who can for a moment consistently imagine, that He, who is infinite in all His perfections, who is the fountain of justice, of mercy, and of truth, requires to be appeased by a literal sacrifice; that redemption can actually be purchased of him; that he needs to be placated by the blood of a substitute? When, therefore, we read of the wonderful dealings of God with His people, and find Him unceasingly exhibiting His forbearance towards them, while they were as unceasingly rebelling against His authority; when we look at the character of His various providences,—the deliverances He effected for them, and the protection He afforded them,—how must we be impressed with the amiableness of His nature, and

His benevolent intentions towards the children of men!

The word *redemption*, then, in the language of the Bible, is equivalent to *deliverance;* and as applied to Jesus, it is expressive of that deliverance which he has effected for the world.

We are now prepared to ask, Why is Jesus called our Redeemer? What is the nature of the redemption he effects? How, and from what, can he be said to redeem us? And who are the subjects of Christian redemption? These questions, as will be seen, cover a wide field of inquiry, and I shall only be able to present a few of the thoughts they suggest.

Why, then, is Jesus called our Redeemer, and what is the deliverance he came to effect? You are all, without doubt, acquainted with the popular opinions on these points. It has long been maintained, by professors of theology, that Christ came to redeem us from the curse pronounced on the progenitors of our race, by which we were subjected to "the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever." But does the Bible speak in such terms? Is this the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Not so do I read the records of the New Testament. We are told by Paul, that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all *iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Unto you first," we also read, "God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you by turning

away every one of you from his *iniquities.*" Hence the redemption of Christ was a redemption from *sin.* He was sent here to bless us by saving us from *sin.*

And now let me ask, if you can conceive of an object which could more justly claim the interposing hand of our heavenly Father, or one more worthy the toils and the sacrifices of our blessed Redeemer? It is, indeed, a great privilege to be exempted from the trials and sufferings of earth; and few of us would not wish to escape them, if possible. But suppose Christ had come to save us from suffering in every form; suppose he had armed our bodies against the shafts of disease, rendering them invulnerable; suppose he had given to the poor an abundance of temporal goods; that he had restored the departed to the arms of their friends; that he had dried up the tears from the cheek of the orphan; that he had placed us all above the reach of outward calamity;—suppose no dangers could approach us, no misfortune could assail, no weakness could depress, no sufferings could subdue, and the world were before us, a paradise of joy, ready to minister to our earthly desires;— what, I ask, would all these privileges and immunities amount to, while the heart was estranged and alienated from God, while the soul was polluted by prevailing passions, and when conscience was reproving us for our waywardness and folly? "A wounded spirit, who can bear?"

There is, then, no evil we can suffer to be com-

pared with sin, while there is no good we can covet to be compared with holiness; a heart that is sanctified by the spirit of piety, warmed with devout and benevolent affections, and animated by the habitual consciousness of duty.

When, therefore, we are told that Jesus came here to "redeem us from sin," to "deliver us from iniquity," to "cleanse us from guilt," we can realize, in some manner, the magnitude of his mission and the excellence of its object. And who can withhold from such a Redeemer the affectionate gratitude and confiding trust which he merits at our hands?

Having thus noticed the character of the redemption which Christ came to effect, we are prepared to ask, in the second place, *how* he has redeemed us? And on this as on the other point, we are constrained to differ in opinion from those who hold that Christ has redeemed us by suffering as our substitute the punishment of our sins. God's justice, we are told, can be satisfied only by the punishment of the sinner; Jesus has stepped in and offered himself as a substitute for us, and on him have been laid "the iniquities of us all." Hence, it is said, he has redeemed us to God by suffering for us; he has "bought us with a price, even the price of his most precious blood." But is this view of the death of Christ rational or just? Is it consonant with our truest conceptions of God? Does it accord with the obvious teachings of Jesus?

I doubt it much; and the ground of my dissent I will endeavor to state.

First, then, let me say, I am ready to admit that Jesus died on account of sin, else could it not have been said of him that he died for us, the just for the unjust. I am ready also to admit that, had there been no sin in the world, there would have been no need of the Saviour's death, — at least, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Hence there is propriety in saying that he was "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him;" and that "with his stripes we are healed." And in all such language there is necessarily no obscurity, if it is interpreted with a view to reason and facts. It is plain and intelligible, and can be easily understood. It does not imply that God *needed* the sacrifice of His son to move Him to pity; for, before the advent of Christ, our heavenly Father was as favorably disposed towards us as He is at this moment. Neither does it imply that Christ literally *purchased* our redemption by shedding his blood; that his blood was the *price* which was paid for our ransom. It is enough that he died on our behalf; died to move us by his surpassing love; died to attract us in penitence to his cross.

Again: I ask, if it does not appear exceedingly strange that the infinite God, the Father of all and the Fountain of Love, should *require* the blood of His innocent son before he could withdraw from us

the fierceness of His wrath? Can it be that, before He could pardon the penitent sinner, prostrated before Him in all the anguish of an awakened heart, bewailing his follies and imploring forgiveness, the blood of the *innocent* must be shed to appease Him? If this be the character of the love of *God*, where did *man* learn to pity and forbear? If this be His *love*, where is His *mercy?*

You are a father, and have the feelings of a father. Suppose your son to have rebelled against you, his greatest benefactor, — to have violated your laws, and to have treated you with unmerited insult and scorn. Suppose him, at length, like the wandering prodigal, to awaken from his delusion, and to return to you, beseeching you to pardon his folly. What would you think of yourself, nay, what would the world think of you, were you, instead of responding to his prayer, to require another of your sons, eminent for his virtues, and who had never rebelled, to bear the punishment of his brother's sins, before you would consent to hear and forgive! Would not your heart revolt at the thought of a requisition so unjust to the innocent and so unmerciful to the guilty? Should a father act thus in this boasted land of intelligence and freedom, every voice would be instantly raised to condemn his inhumanity. His barbarous conduct would be regarded as a crime of unequalled enormity; and he who should be guilty of so flagrantly violating the dictates of reason as well as of justice, would be held up as an object of merited rebuke.

And yet, such are the feelings, and such is the conduct, imputed by thousands who call themselves Christians, to Him who is the greatest and best of beings; to Him whom the psalmist so eloquently extols as "gracious, and long suffering, and plenteous in mercy."

But this is not all. Let me add, in the third place, that it is the plain and acknowledged doctrine of Scripture, that we are saved by grace: "By grace are ye saved." But how can God be said to save us by *grace*, when our salvation has been *purchased* by the death of another? If the salvation of man has been *purchased* by the offering of Christ, then is it no longer of grace, but of debt. God himself cannot reject us, if Jesus had literally *purchased* our redemption. God is in our debt, and the debt must be paid. Do we not, then, detract from the merits of Infinite *grace*, do we not rob God of His glory as a Father, by imputing to Him conduct which would be disgraceful in man?

The whole error, on this point, arises from interpreting *literally*, what was evidently designed to be *figuratively* understood. It is true that redemption, as we understand it, does imply a satisfaction given, an equivalent paid. But such is not the meaning of the word as used in the Bible. As applied to God, redemption is free. He does not require of us offerings of blood; these were but types of the sufferings of Jesus for the sins of the world.

Hence to my mind it is evident that the doctrine which affirms that the innocent Son of the Infinite

God, one of the persons of the trinity, indeed, died to appease the Father's vengeance; died to move him to love and to pity; died to redeem us from his endless displeasure, — this doctrine, is as repugnant to our sentiments of propriety and justice, as it is inconsistent with the teachings of scripture, and fatal to the exercise of the profoundest attachment to Him. Christ died to unfold to us the riches of that goodness of God, not to make Him friendly towards us. He died to melt us to penitence, not to move *God* to pity; to subdue the rebellious passions of our souls, not to satisfy the demands of offended justice.

And how well does such a mission of mercy and compassion accord with our worthiest conceptions of God! How well does it accord with the character of Him who "is good unto all," and whose "tender mercies" are over all his works! Let us be careful, my hearers, to guard with vigilance the unsullied purity of the character of God! Let us not degrade Him by imputing to him feelings which are dishonorable to man!

But it still remains to be shown how it is that Christ has redeemed us. And here let me briefly remark, that Christ has redeemed us, inasmuch as he has disclosed to us those truths, provided those means, and furnished those motives by which we are led to repent of our sins and return to God. He has disclosed to us the mercy of our heavenly Father, that we may repose on that mercy with confidence. He has disclosed to us the way of

duty and holiness, that we may seek it and walk in it faithfully. And he has revealed to us the destiny of the soul hereafter, that we may learn, while here, to live for heaven. The sinfulness of sin and the certainty of its punishment are the same under the Gospel as they were under the law. Sin is ever the foe of our peace and the disturber of our rest. We cannot indulge in it and escape its consequences; for God will by no means clear the guilty. In or out of the Christian Church, professors or non-professors, the law is the same; we cannot do wrong, and plead the merits of Christ for our excuse. His demand of us all is purity and truth; and never will he acknowledge us as his disciples while we neglect the laws of God.

Christ, therefore, has redeemed us by teaching us truth; by acquainting us with the character and purposes of God; and by unfolding the duty and destiny of man. But above all has he redeemed us by giving us, in his own person, a perfect example of unsinning obedience.

And now I ask, in conclusion, for *whom* has Jesus effected this redemption? For all? Yes, for all! He died for all. He is the Saviour of all; but especially of those who *believe* in his teachings; especially of those who are won by his example; especially of those who are born of his spirit. All such, even *now*, are experiencing the benefits of the mission of Jesus; they are *now* partaking of heavenly rest; and sweet is the peace and joy of their souls. But does this *preclude* the redemption

of others? Does this prove that the disobedient will not be redeemed? By no means, my hearers. We see not *now* all things put under the feet of the Messiah; but the time *will* come when his spirit will reign in every heart; then will all be reconciled to God. The question of salvation is but a question of time. All are alike capable of being subdued to Christ; nor will he cease from his labors, nor will the object of his mission be fully accomplished, until every knee is brought to bow, and every tongue is constrained to confess that he is Lord to the glory of God. The sinner suffers here, because he is not saved; and he will suffer so long as he continues in sin. And we are all of us sufferers so long as we sin, and in every degree in which we sin; — sufferers by every deed of wrong; sufferers by every thought of evil; sufferers by all that sullies the purity and beauty of the soul.

And if we *realized* this; if we looked at the Gospel, not as an engine of terror and vengeance, but as the instrument of God for the peace of our souls; we should all, I think, feel and act differently from what we now do. We should see ourselves in a different light. We should look upon life with different eyes. We should feel we had a *present* to fill; that the Christian life pertains to the *present*, as well as to the *future*; that we are losing its benefits and injuring ourselves so long as we refuse to submit to its guidance and to be governed by its spirit.

And how often, my hearers, and in how many ways, does the Father of our spirits admonish us to repent, and to turn unto Christ! Sometimes His voice comes to us from the depths of calamities and bitter disappointments. Clouds and darkness are round about us. Disasters befall our cherished hopes. The giddy world, which beguiled us with its illusions, is overspread everywhere with sadness and gloom. And the drooping heart bleeds under the conviction of earthly vicissitudes and instability.

Sometimes, too, His voice comes to us in the yet sadder scenes of human sorrow. Sickness lays the strong man low. The arrows of death strike down at our side the neighbor or friend. The accents of joy are exchanged for the wailings of grief. And what, in such scenes, can comfort and sustain us but hope in God, trust in His mercy, and a reconciled heart, which bows with submission to all His decrees, drinks unmurmuringly the cup he presents, and says, in the language of filial confidence, "Not my will, but *Thine* be done."

So, too, the changes of time and the revolutions of years are equally calls to penitence and truth. These are the measures of the sands of life. The falling leaf, the sighing wind, the shifting clouds — what are these but mementos of the waning and wasting of our own earthly being; harbingers of the approach of the winter of life, when *we* shall have done with all temporal things; when, like the myriads who have gone before us, our bodies shall rest in the quiet grave

Let us ask ourselves, then, if *we* have experienced the redemption of Christ? Has he been to us a Redeemer and Saviour? Are our souls delivered from the dominion of lust? Have we sacrificed all to follow him? If so, we are reaping the rewards of fidelity. We are living for God, for holiness, and heaven. We are lifted above the sorrows of earth. Our souls are filled with heavenly peace. And though we *feel* our weakness; though we *know* we are mortal; though the soul often sinks under trial and misfortune; yet, blessed be God! if our *hope* is in Christ; if our *life* is with him; it will be our aim, as we journey to the tomb, to fill our hearts with the purest thoughts; to make our lives radiant with goodness; to grow up daily in likeness to Christ. AMEN.

LET US PRAY.

O GOD, our Heavenly Father: Help us to walk in the steps of our Master. Help us to be born of his spirit of love! Fill our souls with truth and peace! Deliver us from evil; keep us from sin; and enable us to live in obedience to Thee! May the Gospel redemption be wrought in us all; may the joys of a sanctified heart be ours; and, consecrating ourselves to virtue and holiness, may the smiles of Thy countenance ever attend us, and a sense of Thy presence be with us at all times. AMEN.

CHRIST A SOURCE OF JOY.

BY REV. J. MERRIFIELD. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 PETER I.

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. 1 PETER I. 8.

We are so constituted that, in order to attain to the highest happiness of which our nature is capable, it is necessary that we cherish an active and abiding faith in the Author of our being. The deeper emotions of the soul are never satisfied with mere outward attainments and uses, but they are continually prompting us to aspire to communion with the Invisible and Eternal. But, as the soul is conscious and intelligent, its emotions demand as their complement, intelligence and consciousness in the Invisible Power to which it aspires. Therefore, it is impossible for faith in God as a mere *principle* of universal life, to satisfy our nature, or under all circumstances to make us rejoicingly happy.

It is easy to see that the faith which is adapted to this great want of the soul, must be based upon the revelations from the heavenly world to the

inhabitants of this world; must convey the assurance that there is a life not limited to the present scene; that the few swiftly passing days of mingled joy and sorrow allotted to this world, are not the whole of man's existence; that the Father of spirits, of whom are all things, is really the Supreme Intelligence and Love. Now, the collection of writings called the Bible, constantly, and by an authority that we find it impossible to set aside, challenges our faith in such a life, and in such a Father above, by the revelation which it contains of God, heaven, angels, and immortality. Therefore a true faith recognizes the spiritual inspiration of these writings, and accords to them an authority in all things pertaining to the higher life, vastly above that of any other productions. It receives Jesus as the most exalted agent of the Divinity, as an individual enjoying in the highest degree the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that he might be able to mirror forth the glory of the Almighty to His children, and thus lead them on in the way of reconciliation and endless improvement. This belief in Christ produces joy unspeakable and full of glory; because Christ is exhibited as the medium for conveying to us a knowledge of the unmingled beneficence of the Father toward all His children. The true Christian faith accepts, therefore, what Jesus said of himself, as the truth; receives him as the Son of God in a sense pre-eminent over all the other sons of the Most High, and bows with meekness and reverence to his teachings, as to the

instructions of an Elder Brother who has stood in the audience chamber of the Eternal.

From the nature of the case, we can have no confidence in Jesus, except as the character which he represented himself to be. The moment we deny him the position he claims for himself, we make him a misguided and fanatical man, or an imposter; and how much of our confidence can we bestow upon either of these characters?

But we may believe Jesus to be the divinely anointed Son of God, and that he came into the world to save it; that he performed many wonderful works which no other person could do; and that he even rose from the dead to the gaze of men in the flesh to attest the divinity of his mission, and something still be needed to constitute us genuine, rejoicing believers in Jesus. We must believe in the success of this Divine mission; and our belief must be of that active and enduring nature which clothes itself with the form of a higher life than the mere life of the outward world.

It cannot give you, nor me, my dear brother or sister, unutterable joy to believe all things written concerning the life and teachings of our Lord, if we still think he will never succeed in accomplishing every particular of the great work which he came to do. It cannot satisfy us to believe that he was sent, as John declares, to be the Saviour of *the world*, if we think the entire world is never to be blessed with the light and glory of *actual* salvation or reformation. It cannot give occasion for the

highest joy to believe him to be sent as a benefactor to men, if all those whom he came to benefit, are never to realize this good from his mission. What joy can there be in believing that Jesus is the foe of evil, if evil is still never to be purged from the characters of all who have felt its baneful influences? How much glory can there be in any rejoicing in Jesus, which is limited by the proposition that the dire principle of evil is to hold its iron sway over the great majority of mankind to endless ages; so that the fair temple of creation shall be forever marred by the sight of an inconceivably vast and ruinous desert; a dreary smoking waste rendered appallingly hideous by the darkness of spiritual desertion, the exulting yells of demons, and the desolate wail of despair? How nearly unutterable can be the joy occasioned by believing that Jesus will succeed in his labors for our race, so far as to rescue here and there an *individual* from the common ruin, and elevate him to the highest degree of holiness and happiness, while the great mass are to be correspondingly degraded, plunged into the lowest depths of perdition, and rendered the vile slaves of sin and the devil, the irreconcilable enemies of God and goodness, the wretched objects of ever-enduring and ever-increasing agony of spirit? My dear brother, it cannot *fill your rejoicing with glory* to believe that Jesus is *your* Saviour, unless you can be assured that he is also the Saviour of your neighbor, whom you are bound to love as yourself. It

cannot clothe the heavens with unsullied beauty to your gaze, and cause all creation to glow with lovliness, to believe that *you* shall be raised from the dead incorruptible, and made like unto the angels, at the same time that multitudes of your neighbors, including, perhaps, a child, a companion, a brother or sister, a father or mother, or all these, are to rise to a state of unmixed corruption, made like unto demons, to be eternally excluded from the hope, even, of a more merciful condition!

O, no! this cannot be; for we are all brethren, the children of the common Father, members of one great body, and members of one another; and "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the members rejoice with it." There is a tie of relationship running through the entire family of humanity that is indissoluble; hence, the existence of suffering in any individual must always excite the painful sympathy of every good man so long as such suffering exists; and those whose characters are the most pure and lovely, whose lives are most conformable in spirit to Christ's doctrine, are so much the more susceptible to painful emotions at the knowledge of pain in others, that they are the most deeply afflicted at the miseries of the world; they are the ones who most anxiously desire the improvement and happiness of every individual in the world. Now let such persons be assured that this great good, which they so earnestly desire for every member of the great body, is never to be realized;

but that, on the contrary, the pain and sorrow which afflict the great mass of their brethren, are eternally to afflict them, in constantly aggravated intensity; let them be assured that there is to be no end to pain and sorrow and malignity, and it is utterly impossible for them to rejoice with joy unspeakable! impossible to realize the highest happiness of which their nature is capable!

Thus we see that a faith which so limits the benefits of the Divine arrangement as to exclude a single soul from the final participation in them, most signally fails to exhibit the crowning characteristic of a true faith, in that it does not produce unspeakable joy in the soul of the believer; but, on the contrary, must be adapted, from its limited character, to produce unspeakable sorrow!

But how must we believe in Christ, that our faith may produce such joy in the soul?

We must not only believe what his biographers say of him as a teacher sent from God and clothed with divine authority and power, but we must believe in the complete success of his mission; and must so apply his teachings to our lives, that we shall experience the *demonstration* of their truth, and realize the indwelling and communion of the Divine Comforter, the Holy Spirit which he communicates as the witness to the true believer. We must thus regard him as bound to perfect the work of regeneration which he has undertaken; as pledged to reign over the moral world, till all without exception shall confess his high calling, and

realize the perfection of character which he illustrates; and till the universe, throughout every department, shall become radiant with the glorious light of salvation, and good alone shall be seen to constitute the final portion of all intelligences, in every realm of the Creator's unlimited empire. This view and this experience alone can satisfy the soul in its aspirations for good, give peace in the hour of trouble, relieve the despairing, and light up the lamp of unutterable rejoicing in all the avenues of our being.

I do not say that it is impossible for a believer in the perpetual reign of evil, to experience *any relief whatever*, from a limited faith in Jesus; for many such are in the habit of declaring to the world, that they really do possess great joy in believing; that they do enjoy a spiritual assurance of the remission of their sins and of their reception into the divine favor; and that they have a goodly prospect of finally entering upon a glorious immortality, with many more of their fellow beings, how many, it is true, they confess they do not know. I say many affirm that they are thus happy; and I cannot dispute their word, strange as it appears, that an individual with a human heart can enjoy one moment's peace, in the belief that a single fellow being, (not to say a child, a companion, or a parent,) is exposed to the awful doom of endless condemnation!

I cannot dispute men's words when they tell me they are happy in this belief, but I think they often

deceive themselves; for when pressed upon this point, they generally confess that their joy is indeed mingled with sorrow; that their gladness is quickly succeeded by mourning, whenever they reflect that so many of their race must inevitably be consigned to the horrors of endless night. And it adds nothing, essentially, to their peace, to reflect that the finally lost alone are themselves to blame; since they might have been saved if they would. Such reflections do not reach to the bottom of the matter. They render that woe none the less certain; for, according to the creeds, multitudes, with each successive revolution of the earth on its axis, certainly do take the fatal plunge into the horrid gulf of perdition, whether they might have done otherwise or not.

The sincere believer in endless misery cannot go where he can avoid this awful thought that stares him continually in the face, and poisons all his joy. "My dear neighbor whom I highly esteem and love, my most intimate friends, the companion of my life, even, or my children, may next be added to the vast tide of condemned humanity, which is perpetually rolling its fearful surges into the dark sea of hell, to suffer from age to age, an ever accumulating burden of misery; to utter a never ceasing wail of burning despair."

This is the heart language of the true devotees of this most awful doctrine; and hence they must go, in a great degree, bowed down with sorrow and with gloom. And the joy they feel, is felt only

when they lose sight, for the moment, of the dreadful results of the divine arrangement, as seen through their theology; and their minds are beguiled, by some means, into a contemplation of only one view in the great picture, where fancy exhibits to their gaze a prospective union in heaven of themselves and some of their dearest connections.

But as their joy is limited by this partial view and by a partial experience founded on this view, it cannot be the kind of exultation referred to in the text. It is a trembling, a fearing joy, and not a joy which is unutterable on the account of its greatness. It is a joy interrupted by sorrow, doubt, gloomy apprehensions, harrowing anxieties, and distressing anticipations, whenever their minds revert to the dreadful issue; and not a joy that is *full of glory*.

Thus, we see that the text is totally irreconcilable with the sentiment of endless woe, and constitutes a most powerful argument against it. It is utterly impossible for the humane to experience an unspeakable and completely glorious joy, and believe, at the same time, that the objects of their sympathy and love are daily and hourly dropping into the pit of a hell which knows no hope. But, as the highest experience of the Christian religion *does* embrace this most exalted state of mind mentioned in the text, it follows that endless misery constitutes no part of the true Christian doctrine.

How truly may the faith which proposes no

limits to the benefits of the divine arrangement as brought to view in Christ, be characterized, as to its experience, by the language of the text! How truly does such a faith originate in the soul a joy so pure, so exquisite, and so overflowing, that it cannot be expressed in words! that it can only be said of it, it is full of glory! What a scene in prospect opens to the view of the true believer in Jesus, under the exercise of the divine experience of his faith! He is not compelled to the effort of satisfying his mind with the bare hope of personal benefit in the next world, nor with the bare contemplation of the sense of justification which he realizes by believing Jesus to be *his* Saviour. He is not forced into so selfish and unhappy a position; but he enjoys the blessed privilege of rising as on the wings of angels, to contemplate in vision the scene of an exalted universe, gathered into one, in the realization of the character of Christ! every form of error and sin abolished! every inharmonious note that now "grates harsh discord" in creation, hushed in eternal silence! every hideous footprint of Satan totally and forever erased! every countenance made radiant with the sacred glow of purity and love! every tongue vocal with expressions of gratification and praise! every person clothed with the unfading garments of a glorious immortality! the magnificent temple of creation illuminated in every department by the radiant glory of salvation! Jesus, our Elder Brother, presenting with joy to his Father and our Father, a reconciled race, of whose

spiritual or heavenly nature, he is the representative and first fruits! The all glorious and eternal Father proving Himself to be indeed the life, the love, the joy, the all of every creature!

Glorious consummation! Well may our ardent love flow forth towards him who is the manifestation of all these things, even though we have not seen Him with our bodily eyes! Well may we, with such a faith and its legitimate spiritual assurance, endorse the language of the apostle; "Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Now, who, believing these things, can fail to be influenced by such a faith to an active proceeding on the basis of that higher life which the gospel presents to view; a proceeding which shall *demonstrate* the excellency and the power of Christianity beyond the reach of successful cavil? Who that believes this view of the gospel to be correct, can possibly rest satisfied with a mere theory of religion, without such application of its principles to his life, as shall cause him to realize the glory of salvation in his daily experience, as the result of his faith, agreeably to the expression following the text, "receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." My brethren, it is true that the theory of religion alone is not sufficient to bring us the enjoyment of salvation. We may speculatively believe that God is good, that Jesus is the manifestation of His love, that there is noth-

ing vindictive in his character or government, and that salvation is universal; and yet be scarcely benefitted by our faith. The man who is in the possession of untold treasures, but allows them to remain locked up in his coffers, deprives both himself and society of all the real benefits of wealth. He who has acquired a knowledge of mathematics or astronomy, but makes no application of that knowledge to the uses of life, might, so far as any good is to be realized from these things, as well have remained ignorant of them. Had our fathers contented themselves with merely believing that all men are born equal, and that liberty and the pursuit of happiness are among the inalienable rights of all, they never would have come into the actual possession of freedom for themselves and posterity. Even so, he who has become aware that endless torments are a superstitious vagary, that bloody sacrifices to propitiate the Deity are simply an abomination, that an opposing fiend, engaged in a partially successful warfare with the Almighty, is an absurdity, and that the opposite of all these is the truth; if he content himself to believe thus, without applying his faith to an actual separation of himself from sin, and to the reformation of society,—loses the benefit of his doctrine; does not receive the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul; does not communicate to the world the riches which lie at his command.

I believe, my brethren, that there is too great a tendency among us to rest in the mere reception of

our better theory of religion; whereas, we ought so to reform our practice in its light as to *demonstrate* its superiority.

The man who owns a farm on one of our beautiful prairies, may congratulate himself on the superiority of his soil over that of his neighbor who is confined to a possession on one of the poorest barrens of the country; and still, by his idleness and neglect, his beautiful farm may become covered with weeds, and poverty may invade his dwelling; while his neighbor, by making the best of his poor and barren soil, by diligently improving what little strength it contains, may not only secure a comfortable support, but actually grow rich. But with the same amount of labor and care, who can fail to see that the prairie farm would produce ten times the amount of fruit, and thus show, by a proof which none could set aside, its great superiority?

It is possible for us, with our superior doctrine, to occupy a relation to those holding a doctrine gloomy and repulsive to our sight, corresponding with that of the first mentioned farmer to his less fortunate neighbor. It is not enough that we produce as good and as abundant fruit as the orthodox world, for we possess the elements of a much higher productiveness. Our fruits, therefore, should be so abundant, and so superior among our believers, that our enemies should no longer be able to charge any immoralities which may occur among us, upon our doctrine; but that they should be obliged to confess our doctrines to be of a purify-

ing character, from the uniform exhibition of the genuine fruits of the spirit among its believers.

O let us endeavor so to apprehend Christ, that we shall really feel him to be a cause of unutterable joy; that we shall rise by this faith above the degradation, gloom, fear, and perplexity, which are the inseparable attendants of the merely outward life; and realize truly what it is to receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. It is glorious to think of God as perfect in goodness, and as directing the operations of His universe with unerring certainty to the attainment of nothing but final good! It is glorious to think of man as the offspring of the Eternal, the object of His never-failing care, the being on whom he lavishes most freely His love! It is glorious to think of Jesus as our Elder Brother, the representative of our heavenly nature, the pledge of perfection for universal humanity, the character chosen to exhibit our Father's love to us and to reconcile us to God.

It is glorious to think of heaven as a condition finally attainable by all the weary children of earth; the pure, lovely, and blessed state which consists in being united in spirit with our God, and made like unto the angels whose supreme pleasure it is to do His will. But it is most especially glorious to realize the visitation of the Holy Comforter in our hearts, as a witness to the truth of these things, to establish within us that heavenly communion which unites us to our Father above, and causes us

to know ourselves to be in the reception of the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

The joy originating in our faith is thus full of glory. And it is truly unspeakable; for the heavenly cannot be adequately expressed through the earthly, and this joy is heavenly. It has no unpleasant limitations. It gleams brightly through the thickest darkness that ever palls the earth, even that which lowers over the tomb of the impenitent.

May this joy in its fulness be ours. May we truly love our Lord, though we see him not with our outward eyes; but, believing, may we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

LET US PRAY.

And now, Almighty Father, may the influence of Thy Holy spirit be extended to us all, to impress the truth more deeply upon our hearts, and to quicken our spirits with an active disposition to enter, earnestly and permanently, into the life of righteousness. May our faith in Thee and in Jesus, our spiritual leader, be no mere assent of the understanding, but an active, living principle, continually manifesting itself in the production of such good fruits as constitute the most perfect outward adornment of the Christian character; and thus may we become chosen mediums for receiving and dispensing heavenly good, to the end that others, seeing our good works, may also be led to glorify Thee, our Father who art in Heaven. AMEN.

VALUE OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY REV. SYLVANUS COBB. SCRIPTURE LESSON, MATT. VI.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.—MATT. XIII. 45, 46.

THE kingdom of heaven in the text is the religion of Jesus. The prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah, and his establishment of a kingdom which should subdue the world, a kingdom of righteousness and peace. The Jews generally understood that this kingdom should be a temporal one, swayed and supported by physical force. And the disciples of Jesus, though they learned much of the nature of his religion, did not understand the application of the term *kingdom* to the influence of the principles of his religion, until after his resurrection. They were looking for their Master's assuming regal authority, and casting off the Roman yoke, and restoring to Israel their former, and *more* than their former national freedom and glory. But when they learned that the kingdom of Jesus is a spiritual kingdom, they doubtless understood in a new and clear light such precious sayings of

their Master as these: "The kingdom of God is come unto you." "Preach the kingdom of God, and heal the sick." "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, lo here, or lo there, for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened."

Now, as the kingdom of heaven, which is the Messiah's kingdom, is a spiritual kingdom, the reign of Gospel truth, it is, in plain literal terms, the religion of Jesus in its dominion over the hearts and lives of men. In the verse preceding the text, it is likened unto a treasure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. And in the text it is "likened unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The idea is not that the kingdom of heaven is like the merchantman; but the operation of the interests of this kingdom is likened unto such a transaction. Persons who came to any just conception of the value of the religion of the Gospel, would be as persevering and determined in their efforts to possess and hold it, as the merchantman to possess the pearl of great value, for which he disposes of all his possessions. This *religion* therefore is represented by the pearl of great price, or in other words, of great value.

This parable of our blessed Lord leads our minds into a train of profitable reflection. It urges upon us a consideration,

I. Of the value of the Christian religion.

II. Of the wisdom of an early and earnest attention to its principles.

I. *The value of the Christian religion.*

I shall occupy but little time on this point separately, as we shall have occasion to keep it in mind, and further to illustrate it, in our attention to the second part of the discourse.

The true measure of value in any object, is its adaptedness to the promotion of good to mankind. I am aware that it has been a very learned theological sentiment, that the chief importance of anything consists in its tendency to promote the *glory of God.* The Doctors have laughed at the idea that the chief aim of the creation and government of God is the production of *creature* happiness. The supreme good, they have said, and the chief aim of the government of God, of course, is the promotion of His own *glory.*

Now, we are not disposed to deny that the greatest good consists in the promotion of the divine glory, when it is rightly understood; when it is understood that the glory of God consists in that active *goodness* which aims always at the good of His creatures. But the sentiment referred to is held up in a manner to imply a disconnection, and,

to a great extent, an opposition, between the glory of God and the good of mankind. It even supposes that God's glory will be greatly brightened and eternally enhanced, by the display of Divine wisdom and skill in the production of human misery. And a concomitant of this capital error is, that the services of the Christian religion are rather required as a means of promoting God's glory, and even of making Him friendly to us, than as a means of promoting our own usefulness, and our true enjoyment.

But how shall we set ourselves at work to promote God's glory, in a manner disconnected with the promotion of human virtue and happiness? What shall we do for God? He tells us in His word, (Acts xvii. 25,) "that He is not to be worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all, life, breath, and all things." And (Job xxxv. 5, 7, 8,) "Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? or what receivest He of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." (Deut. vi. 24.) "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always." And from the song of the angels at the annunciation of the Saviour's birth, we discover that the highest declarative glory of God is in that system of operation which shall work the highest good of His intelligent family.

For it was a discovery of the perfect plan of salvation for all people, demonstrating the good will of Heaven to men, that inspired the heavenly host to raise the song of *Glory to God in the highest.*

Hence, it is a settled point that we do not diminish, but that we exalt and praise the glory of God, when we say that the measure of value in anything we do or may possess, is its adaptedness to the promotion of human happiness. And by this measure we will proceed to reckon the value of the *religion* which God through Christ has given us.

In the first place, as we travel on the journey of life, the creatures of yesterday, allured by pleasures, but surrounded by dangers, knowing not what a day may bring forth, we want the knowledge of an Almighty Jehovah, infallibly governing all affairs in relation to us and the universe, in wisdom and love. And this knowledge, so indispensable to happiness, the Gospel gives us. The religion of Jesus consists in part in this peace-giving faith in the benevolent Ruler of the world. It tells us of God's universal providence; that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered; that He is nigh unto us to know our wants, for in Him, the Self-existent, whose nature is love, we live, and move, and have our being.

Nothing can fill the place of this faith in God, as a fit and proper substitute. Without it the mind is an aching void, an empty bubble amidst rolling, dashing billows. By it there is a firmness

and dignity added to the mind. It lives in a higher and a wider sphere. Amidst the jars and revolutions and decays of mortal nature, it rests in the arms of Almighty goodness.

We want, likewise, for the full satisfaction of our minds, the hope of renewed and continued being, and that too in a better state, free from the evils which annoy us here. And this hope, to meet our wants, must embrace our friends and neighbors. And such a hope the Gospel richly gives us. And nothing but the Gospel can afford it. It is a distinguishing grace of the Christian religion, in its pristine purity. How precious is this hope. There is no counting of its value. Partner, when you have received the last earthly farewell of your bosom companion, and death has severed those ties which have bound your hearts in mutual joys and sorrows here, for what would you exchange the hope that you shall meet again in sorrowless inseparable union, life and love immortal? Children, when you have done the last office of filial love and respect for your kind and venerated parents, and their withered forms have dropped into the grave, for what would you barter away the hope, that you shall see them bloom again in undecaying, deathless youth, rejoicing with you in the ceaseless benefactions of their Father and your Father, their God and your God? Parents, when you have watched the faltering breath of your dear loved children, and have heard the expression of their last anxious wish for your kind favors, for what

would you sell the hope, that you shall greet them in that building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where their brilliant minds, raised in the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, shall breathe forth the pure spirit of love and praise, the sweet odor of eternity? Fellow mortal, when you contemplate that you, with all mankind, must be swept by the ravages of mortal time from all the endearing scenes of earth, for what consideration would you yield up the hope, that Heaven's immortal spring shall come, and restore the moral universe to life, to blessedness, to glory?

Ah, your hearts exclaim, this hope is priceless. It is Heaven. And this is the hope of the Gospel. He who possesses the Christian religion possesses this hope.

Besides the self-consoling, peace-giving, glorious faith and hope of Christian truth, there is its *moral* excellence. The moral precepts of the Gospel, which grow out of the very spirit of its doctrines of faith, are of incomparable value. Thereby we are required to live in the exercise of love and gratitude to God, our Friend and Benefactor; and in the active services of good will to men. Those precepts, carrying with them the power and spirit of truth, go into all the relations and interests of human life, and carry certain usefulness, and peace, and joy. Husbands and wives are required to live in the constant exercise of mutual kindness, forbearance, and respectful attention. While all

pagan religions make husbands and brothers mere lords and tyrants, and wives and sisters miserable slaves, the Christian religion raises them all to the same level, as the free moral children of God, whose duty and interest it is to promote each other's honor and happiness, and rejoice in each other's prosperity. Parents are required to be gentle, and kind, and faithful, in their treatment and care of their children, training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children are required to live in love with one another, and to honor their father and mother; which includes both the duty of filial respect and obedience when under their care, and of nourishing, sustaining, and cheering their declining years. How amiable and lovely are those children who thus honor their parents. Surely they shall share largely of the blessings of Heaven. Neighbors are required to live in the prevailing influence of that love, which shall sympathize with each other's adversities, and enjoy each other's prosperity; and which will, of course, maintain justice, integrity, and truth, in all their intercourse. Even *love to enemies* is also enjoined; which involves the doctrine of *forgiveness.* This Christian doctrine shines in resplendent glory, compared with the human doctrine of revenge, of overcoming evil with evil. An act of revenge is received as a new injury, and excites the same spirit in return; and this, instead of putting an end to the evil, perpetuates and increases it. But *forgiveness* shames and corrects the foe,

quenches the evil, and shows that the soul of the forgiving party is free and independent, above the power of bitter snarling fools.

But there is no end to the work of estimating the value of the Christian religion. I have already broken my promise of brevity upon it, and yet have just begun. But if you will take a comprehensive view of what I have now presented, of the rich, the renovating, and joy-inspiring faith and hope of Christian truth, and its heavenly moral precepts, all agreeing in one spirit, and view them, and trace them out, in all their adaptedness to the wants and interests of mankind individually and collectively, you must perceive that this heaven-born religion is indeed *a pearl of great price.*

II. Our text urges upon us a consideration of the wisdom of an earnest attention to the subject of Christian truth, and the folly of neglecting it.

Our text likens the kingdom of heaven unto a pearl of great value, to procure which the merchantman sold all that he had. In the time of Christ on earth, and of his apostles, persons were liable to be deprived of their earthly possessions, and even of the esteem of earthly friends, by reason of their espousal of the cause of Christ. And even under these circumstances they found their exchange to be their gain. Go even to the poor man, who is rich in the possession of Christian truth and freedom, and propose to pay him a heavy price in gold for his crouching down a slave to

error and to vice, and he will spurn you, with your contemptible offer, from his presence.

But we bless God that we live not in an age and country where we are required, as a general rule, to sacrifice our earthly possessions for the gospel's sake. True, we are required to do what is reasonable for those institutions of religious worship and instruction which are requisite for the Christian education and culture of the community. But this is not a sacrifice. Though it may and should be done in a self-sacrificing spirit, losing self in our interest for the general good, yet it does not ultimately prove a sacrifice. As the husbandman sows his seed, broadcast, in the spring, and reaps in due time a golden harvest, so he who faithfully labors for the moral and religious culture of the community, reaps to himself and family ten thousand blessings from the general virtue and happiness. Selfishness will be sure to dwarf and stifle itself with its meanness. Christianity is a social religion, and makes the good of each to be promoted by the good of all, and the good of all by that of each.

No; our attention to Christian culture will not make us poor. We can possess the kingdom of heaven *with* our earthly possessions, to double our enjoyment of them. And, to possess ourselves of this invaluable treasure, we have not to neglect our ordinary duties, we have only to devote a reasonable attention to the teachings of the gospel, to the evidences of its truth, and to the dissemination of its principles. And how foolishly, how cruelly do

they treat themselves, wronging their own souls, who neglect this!

But some will say, "I cannot pretend to decide on a subject upon which there has been so much controversy, and that too among great and learned men. I do not know whether there is any *truth* in the Christian religion or not. It is a disputed matter, and how can I decide?" And here, then, you will lie, will you, in a puerile distrust of your own capacity to ascertain and find out the bread of life, and so hunger, and thirst, and famish? Will men act so foolishly in other matters? None but now and then a deep, sunken hypochondriac. An acquaintance of mine, in the prime of life, did, a few years ago, actually starve to death in distrust, with abundance of wealth in his possession, because he imagined that there was no provision for him, and that his family must come to want. But men do not generally act thus in their temporal concerns. And why not? These are all disputed matters. Every important question in politics, and in the system of common education, and in the principles of the ordinary social institutions, has been differed about and disputed, even among great men. Will you therefore loll against the leaning post of indifference, and say, "I know not how to settle these disputed questions: I know not but there is a cheat in all systems of government, and one may be as good or as bad as another: all the principles of common education and social in-

tercourse may be deceptive; I'll have no concern about these things?"

Well, if you will argue thus, go on to perfection, if there is any perfection this way. For there are other matters disputed among the learned. The very existence of our physical natures, the very existence of the material world, has been disputed by learned and ingenious philosophers. Dr. George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, who flourished about one hundred years ago, a great and good man, came to the conclusion "that there is no such thing as a material world; nothing in nature but spirits and ideas." After him a work was published, entitled "A Treatise of Human Nature," which goes still farther, annihilates the world of spirits too, "and leaves nothing in nature but ideas and impressions, without any subject on which they may be impressed."

The great Pyrrho, the founder of this philosophy, who died about three hundred years before Christ, seems to have carried his theory to greater practical perfection than any of his successors. For, according to his biographer, his life corresponded with his doctrine. Therefore if a cart ran against him, or a dog attacked him, or if he came upon a precipice, he would not stir a foot to avoid the danger, giving no credit to his senses. But his attendants, who, happily for him, were not so great skeptics, took care to keep him out of harm's way so that he lived till he was ninety years of age.

Here is something for you, approaching to the

perfection of this *I-don't-know* philosophy. But Pyrrho should have carried it farther, for he no doubt trusted his senses when he felt hungry, and believed that he should be benefitted by partaking of food. But if you are going to neglect a serious attention to the principles of the Christian religion, on the ground that you do not know but it is all deception, and will carry this principle through, you must not plant and sow, for you do not know that anything will come of it. You know not that the sun will rise again, or that the rain will fall. And if these things continue to take place, you do not understand how the lifeless moisture and heat can change the dry, dormant seed into a thrifty tree, to give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. How do you know but it is all deception? Neither can you understand how the food you take into your stomach, should be changed to blood, flesh, sinews, and bones, thus to renew and support the life and strength of your physical nature. How do you know but this is all deception?

Such, my friends, are the sage reasonings of skepticism. How do you like it? Is this imaginary annihilation of every thing calculated to promote human improvement and happiness? It is not; and of course it is profitless. It is even productive of misery, and of course is mischievous. And he is an enemy to man who labors to ensnare and evaporate the human mind with it.

Do you all with one consent say, "We know

that we exist, and that we have certain physical wants; and we know that there are certain provisions which are suited to those wants, and that they have been obtained; and we believe that these provisions may be obtained for time to come? Herein you talk like men of common sense. And we just as well know that we have certain moral wants; and that the principles of the Christian religion are just as perfectly suited to our constitutional moral wants, as the fruits of the earth are suited to our physical wants. We have examined this subject on the present occasion, and have seen it so. If we have any reason to believe that the food we eat is the provision of the God of our physical nature, we have the same reason to believe that the Christian religion is the provision of the God of our moral nature. There is a fitness, a consistency, a reality, a divinity in it. Every believer knows it. And every unbeliever, who will look at it, must see its wonderful adaptedness to the promotion of the most exalted virtue and happiness. And what though they may be unacquainted with the full evidence of the truth of the gospel? Is this a good reason why they should neglect it? Will a man ever be rich if he will not seek what he does not already possess? And, surely, it is worthy of our best endeavors, to seek and obtain the evidence of that truth which is more valuable for the enjoyment of life than everything else. And the evidence is to be obtained by every one who wishes to obtain it, in abundance, and to satisfaction.

And now, my Christian friends, who have tasted and known the richness of heavenly truth, how shall we prove our love for it, and promote our enjoyment of it? If the primitive believers would sacrifice their earthly *all* for the promotion and enjoyment of it, shall we not be willing, at least, in this land of peace and safety, to give it the aid of a virtuous, upright conduct, which conduct shall of itself also tend to our own good? Did the primitive Christians sacrifice those temporal possessions, which would have added to their convenience and enjoyment in life, for the sake of the blessed cause of all causes; and shall we not be prompt to cut off any evil in our conversation or practice, which will be but casting off our own miseries, when we see such evil dishonoring and hindering the cause and kingdom of Jesus? And shall we not have enough self respect and regard for others to excite us to a daily thought and application of the benign principle of the Gospel we profess, for the multiplication of our usefulness and enjoyment?

The religion we profess is too excellent to be made the mere thing of Sabbath day ceremony. It should be our inward life and glory here in this place of worship, and it should go with us into our families and into the world, the image of heaven on earth. This is the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as the pearl of richest, highest value; and all other needed good shall be added unto you.

*LET US PRAY.

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Creator and bountiful Benefactor; command now Thy favor, in rich abundance, upon the word to which we have attended. Move our hearts in gratitude for the gift of Thy Son, for the glorious Gospel of Christ, and for the blessedness of his religion. Help us all to consecrate ourselves unreservedly to Thy service; to hold all our possessions subject to Thy commands; and to employ all our opportunities in the furtherance of Thy kingdom. Pardon our transgressions, keep us in the ways of peace, and save us through the fulness of Thy love. AMEN.

IT IS FINISHED.

BY REV. L. L. SADDLER. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JOHN XIX.

It is finished.—JOHN XIX. 30.

THE deed was done. Fiendish malice had triumphed, and the benevolent Son of God was suspended on the cross. But in crucifying the Lord of life and glory, the principles and sentiments inculcated by the Nazarene Reformer were not expelled from the empire of mind. He had been engaged in his divine enterprise long enough to secure to it a permanent foundation. All that was essential to ensure success to the cause, had been already executed; and when he saw in prospect the triumphs of gospel grace, he exclaimed, "It is finished." What visions must have flitted across his mind in that fatal hour, when contemplating that arrangement of Providence which doomed him to an ignominious death. The Past, with all its diversified scenes of good and ill, joy and sorrow, virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, weal and woe, came up to view, and merged itself into the Present, exhibiting equal variety, imperfection,

and instability; the same mixed condition of felicity and unhappiness, and the same evils to deplore. Everywhere was suffering as well as bliss. The earth was full of wrongs and injuries, corruption and vice. He saw, in the order of things presented in the history of the world, that exceptionable condition which rendered his sacrifice for the renovation and perfection of society essentially necessary. And, if it were not for perceiving that existing evils in the hand of God, like his own sufferings and tragic end, would be over-ruled for good and made ultimately to minister to the happiness of creation, he could but have regarded them as an impeachment of the goodness of Heaven. But foreseeing that present ills were to issue in a good result, he could say confidingly, "Thy will be done." The future succeeded. A panoramic view of coming events glided quickly past. He saw generations go and come, kingdoms rise and fall, the changes and fluctuations of Time, the conflict of mind with mind that would agitate and convulse the nations of the earth, the ever-varying circumstances that would be witnessed in the world's history, and the errors and pernicious practices that would characterize unborn millions of the race. He saw, too, the divine principles of his own religion gradually operating like leaven in meal, on the mass of mind; moulding thought, motive, purpose, and action into its own celestial nature; and redeeming humanity from its grosser elements. He knew the prejudices it would have to encounter,

the impediments that would he thrown in its way, the difficulties it would have to overcome, the direful opposition that would be arrayed against it, and the warfare that would attend its struggle for advancement. But he perceived that it possessed the energy of omnipotence; and, though doomed to witness many repulses and reverses of fortune, and to become much corrupted and perverted by the wisdom of earth, it would slowly and surely enlarge the sphere of its influence, until civil, religious, moral, social, and political institutions were made to bear its likeness. Devoted as he was to the interests of humanity, he dwelt more solicitously on the condition and happiness of the world than on his own personal welfare. He was conscious that the adoption of the principles he had inculcated, was prerequisite to the perfection of human felicity. And when he saw in prospect the ultimate triumphs of gospel grace, in despite of all opposition, and the consequent redemption of mankind from error, sin, and woe; though it involved the sacrifice of himself, he bowed his head and said, "It is finished." When Alexander had completed his conquests at the East, and had made himself master of all the accessible territory of Asia, it is said that "he wept, because he had no more worlds to conquer." He felt that his military career in which he took such exquisite delight, the pride and glory of his life, "was finished." It was not enough to know that the Eastern world was subject to his sway. His ambition and love of con-

quest and victory, rendered him desirous of an opportunity to make other achievements, and vanquish other foes.

But what was that work which the Macedonian Conqueror had finished? Was it a mission fraught with lasting good, that he should hear the plaudits and praises of the world? Was it an enterprise that his own sense of justice and propriety could approve? Was it a performance on which he could reflect with pleasing satisfaction? One that would prove of any advantage to the race? No wonder he should seek other means of gratification than reviewing the deeds that awarded him the sceptre of universal dominion; nor that he should endeavor to hide himself from the memory of the past, by indulgence and revelry that would divert attention from scenes previously witnessed. What had he done in that brilliant career that raised him to the highest summit of power? What were the prospective results of the signal achievement that subjected a world to his sway? Had he overthrown old institutions and dynasties, and broken up oppressive systems and exceptionable forms of government? Had he relieved the masses from burthensome exactions and slavish servitude? Had he introduced a better order of things, secured the people better laws, greater privileges, more desirable forms of government, and a greater degree of liberty? Had he wrought changes that proved in any respect serviceable to humanity, and

promised the future amelioration of the nations that were subjected to his control?

He had projected and carried forward a desolating war of conquest, in which he had ravaged countries, sacked cities, pillaged towns, slaughtered armies, indiscriminately massacred the helpless and innocent; devastated and nearly depopulated kingdoms; dethroned princes and ruined subjects; turned abodes of peace and plenty into places of penury and woe; made multitudes of wives widows, and children fatherless, who rent the air with shrieks and cries, groans and bitter lamentations.

And for what had he scattered the blight and the mildew in his path, and recklessly sacrificed the lives of millions? For what had he committed his ruthless depredations, and made humanity weep at every pore? Not for the purpose of breaking the yoke of tyranny, and granting freedom to the downtrodden and the oppressed; not with a view of improving the social state by mild and equitable laws; but to gratify an insatiable thirst for power and place; to feast lawless indulgence and minister to vitiated appetites and passions; to provide thrones and empires as the spoils of victory for his generals; and to leave to the world a rare specimen of splendid abilities combined with egregious folly — the exhibition of a genius that could conquer a world, but was unable to conquer himself. Brilliant as was his career in enterprise, and glorious as was the result in achievement, his victories carried with them no advantage to the well-being of

man, no triumph of principle, no change of policy that would rear a monument of honor to his imperishable fame.

How very dissimilar the enterprise in which the champion of the Protestant Reformation was engaged; and what different results attend his achievements and victories! The war he waged was a war of mind, a contest of principle. He fought, not for the extermination of battling legions, and the triumph of physical force; but for the overthrow of religious and moral corruption, and the triumph of truth and righteousness. He exerted himself, not to sacrifice human life and interests for personal ends, but for the purpose of redeeming Christianity from the errors that had been incorporated with it; and for the diffusion of that knowledge among men, that would free them from the shackles of superstition and sin. Single handed and alone, he dared to oppose the proceedings of Papal authority. Europe was a magazine of combustibles, and the protest issued by Martin Luther against the sale of indulgences, instantly lighted the fires of the Reformation. He had set the elements in commotion, and though their agitation should result in the convulsion of nations, he had the reflection that the strife was a struggle for truth, for the rights of man, for religious and moral freedom, and might result in the welfare of the race. Besides, his designs did not reach to physical contests; and if such were instituted to check

his progress, the adversary was accountable therefor. The warfare, fraught with such momentous consequences, was prosecuted with a zeal and alacrity worthy such a cause. Multitudes flocked to the standard of the Reformer. Some of the mightiest minds of Europe enlisted in his service. Kings and princes favored the change; and innovation on existing principles and institutions, became the order of the day.

Luther saw the triumphs of the Reformation, and felt assured that the Papal power had become so weakened that it could never regain its former supremacy; and that the principles of religious liberty were planted on such a foundation, they could not be removed. The enterprise had acquired such a foothold, it was certain of success. In this contest, Luther was industriously and ardently engaged, braving every danger, and exerting himself the most vigorously when most fiercely pressed by the opposition, till organization and order had rendered the cause secure. But when the confession of faith, drawn up by the famous Melancthon, called the Augsburg Confession, was presented to the assembled princes of Germany, and received the signature of the four principal ones of the empire, the finishing stroke was given to the Revolution; and Luther had little else to do than to persuade princes, states, and universities, to confirm by adoption the Reformation he had so signally achieved.

How much more glorious the victories and con-

quests of Luther, than the achievements and triumphs of Alexander! How much more honorable to man! How much more admirable in its results! How much more worthy the praises and the plaudits of the world! The Macedonian Conqueror deluged the earth in gore, scathed with deadly blight whatever came in his way, left desolation and ruin in his track, made shipwreck of every moral and virtuous principle, and in a measure smothered the nobler and better sentiments of humanity. The Reformer of the fifteenth century exploded the corruptions of priestcraft, paved the way for the general improvement of the race, and secured to man those inalienable rights which will prove to him an invaluable legacy.

The French Revolution brought out a genius, a prodigy, that struck the world with amazement. Fancy could scarcely have conceived of more astonishing and remarkable events than were enacted in real life. The idea that an individual, in modern times, should arise from obscure origin and aim at universal empire; that he should elevate himself to the throne of a mighty nation, subdue other kingdoms, give crowns to whomsoever he will, and successfully contend against the allied sovereigns of Europe; and make all nations tremble for fear of subjugation to his sway, — seems so very incredible that, had it not been verified by fact, it would appear too extravagant for the tale of fiction — too chimerical for the romance of history. But the

circumstances of the times facilitated the development and practical application of genius, and the sudden elevation of this master spirit to power. The dazzling meteor shone with transcendant lustre, and a world gazed in stupified astonishment till it gained the zenith of its glory. His plans gigantic, his execution magical, his operations stupendous, achievement followed achievement in rapid succession, till in early life he found himself dictator to various countries in Europe, and the possessor of means that promised universal dominion.

Oppressed by his despotic exactions, and disposed to free themselves from the chains of tyranny that had been fastened upon them by a foreign usurper, kingdoms that had been made submissive to his will, formed an alliance with those who were jealous of his purposes, and who had not already bowed the knee of subjugation, and after a long struggle, vanquished the common enemy. The decisive blow was struck on the plains of Waterloo. No conflict of physical force ever witnessed was more sanguinary and awful, none more exciting and agitating to a spectator, than that which determined the fate of Napoleon.

And what must have been the feelings of that mighty chieftain when he saw host encountering host, and division after division of his trained warriors fall on the field of battle; when he perceived the equality of the contest, the rivalry of management, the impossibility of breaking the ranks of the enemy except to be restored again, the doubtful-

ness of the issue and the occasional repulses of his veteran troops, knowing that his all was staked on the result of the engagement! Aye! what must have been his emotions when he saw the reinforcement come to the aid of the enemy just as he had made an impression that promised him victory, conscious that it would now prove a disastrous defeat! What his sensations when he beheld that mighty army, his pride and his defence, mostly weltering in their gore, and the residue fleeing as refugees before the pursuing legions that had gained the mastery; when he saw that fate, which he ever thought ruled human destinies, had decided against him; and when with a realizing sense of the consequences to himself, he exclaimed, with a countenance deadly pale, "For the present, *all is finished.*"

We might here pause and inquire, what was thus terminated? Not that bloody scene of battling strife, merely, where the slaughter and carnage had piled up heaps of slain veterans, and furnished a spectacle that would make the stoutest heart sicken with appalling horror; but there was ended that career of wild, ruthless ambition, to which had been sacrificed every noble and virtuous sentiment, the peace, the happiness, and the interests of nations; that pursuit after power, aggrandizement, and glory, that made the heroic conqueror reckless of everything but self, and to the acquisition of which, public and private treasures, the works of genius and art, the monuments of the

Past, the freedom of countries, and the lives of many millions of people were unfeelingly forfeited. There was closed that frightful drama, which had robbed industry of its hard earnings; devastated the fairest portions of the earth, and drenched its soil in blood; shrouded Europe in sackcloth, and filled the air with shrieks and sighs, the groans of distress and the wailings of despair. There was finished that mad enterprise for dominion and rule which in the name of democracy had seated a tyrannical despot in the chair of State, and again deprived him of his sceptre and his crown; which had nigh prostrated every civil institution, annihilated moral principle, and stripped society of its ornaments and its jewels; which had served to stifle the exercise of benevolence, sympathy, humanity, and the more amiable virtues of the heart; to cultivate the rugged and baser passions; to destroy all regard for justice, all sense of propriety; and to brutalize instead of improving the race.

What a contrast in the words, "It is finished!" as uttered by the Nazarene Reformer! What an infinite disparity in object and pursuit! What an infinite difference in result! He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. It was not his office to rob the world of the little means possessed for procuring comfort and joy, but to impart additional sources of enjoyment. He was not engaged in an enterprise that would blight the fairest flowers of virtue, and prey in riotous recklessness on helpless innocence; but one that would develop and culti-

vate the principles of moral goodness, check and discipline passions, restrain vice, elevate motive, ennoble thought and purpose, guard and protect innocence, and perfect character and conduct. It was not his calling to prove a fatal scourge to the interests of society; to make wives widows, and children fatherless; to bedew the earth with tears, and sacrifice everything valuable and dear for the attainment of worldly glory; but to adopt means for increasing human happiness; to bind up the broken hearted; to comfort all that mourn; to give beauty for ashes, the joy of praise for the spirit of heaviness; to soothe the afflicted; to minister to the wants of the needy and distressed; and to throw a smile of hope over the countenance of despair.

In short, it was his mission to carry man forward to the highest state of improvement and bliss of which he is susceptible on the earth, and crown him with immortal life and glory in heaven.

The enterprise had been carried through its incipient stages. The Saviour had fulfilled the law of rites and ordinances that it might be removed. He had instituted a new form of religion, calculated to operate on mind and heart to their sanctification. He had defined human duty, and presented in his own life an example of righteousness. He had portrayed the love of Heaven, and was about to demonstrate its fulness in the sacrifice of his life. He had put into operation elements that he knew would accomplish in due time the glorious pur-

poses had in view; and so, when yielding up his precious spirit to him who gave it, he saw his triumphs and exclaimed, "It is finished!" True, all that was contemplated in the mission of Christ was not completed; but all that was written in the scriptures concerning his personal operations had been performed. He had finished the preparatory work essential to the accomplishment of the noble designs had in view; so that he could scan the distant future, and perceive, in the end, the consummation of a work worthy of a God, and glorious to humanity.

When the Lord of life and glory surveyed his work, and called up to his vision the deeds already performed, in which he perceived a life devoted to virtue, godliness, and humanity; and, turning to the future, saw his efforts influencing succeeding generations; moulding society into conformity to the principles inculcated; diffusing among communities and nations the sentiments of love and charity; softening the asperities of human nature; inciting mind to exert itself to be useful; and giving rational intelligence such a directing bias towards friendship, equity, and goodness, that the race of Adam will be heard to say,

> "Our falchions we'll to ploughshares beat,
> The days of strife are o'er;
> Our spears we'll turn to pruning hooks,
> There shall be war no more,—"

there must have been a glow of satisfaction felt stealing over his senses, though in the agonies of

death, as he uttered the words, "It is finished!" And what resignation must he have felt to his doom, when his eye rested on the consummation of the work of his mediatorial office, and saw rank after rank, and company after company of the redeemed enter the Paradise of God, till an assembled universe appeared in a sanctified state before the throne of Heaven, to join the choir of angel worshippers in celebrating the song of salvation to God and the Lamb; when the triumphs of victorious grace had secured for them an inheritance of immortal glory, and he should exclaim, as on the cross, "It is finished," — and God is "all in all."

*LET US PRAY.

FATHER: In the Spirit of Thy dear Son, would we draw nigh to Thee in prayer. We bless Thy great Name for the glorious Gospel of the Son of God. Devoutly do we thank Thee for the labors and sacrifices of Christ; for the triumphs of his kingdom in the hour of his suffering; for the assurance begotten by his exclamation, "It is finished!" Sanctify us by the power of his truth, of his life, and of his death. Bless us through the examples of all the faithful on earth, now sainted in heaven. Keep us to the end of our journey steadfast in Thee; and, after that, may we dwell at Home with Thee. We ask all in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

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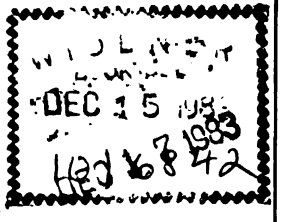

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